IN THE MORNING OF LIFE

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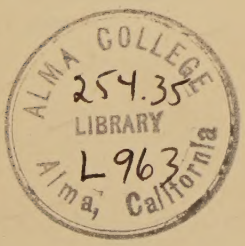
IN THE MORNING OF LIFE

CONSIDERATIONS AND MEDITATIONS
FOR BOYS

BY

HERBERT LUCAS, S.J.



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PREFATORY NOTE

THE discourses contained in this volume were addressed to the boys at Stonyhurst during the school year 1903-4. It is hoped that they may be found helpful by others besides school-boys.

H. L.

FEAST OF ST IGNATIUS LOYOLA,
July 31, 1904.

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IN THE MORNING OF LIFE

I.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF GOD*

"Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: They please me not."—ECCLES. xii. 1.

IT needs no profound philosopher to see and to say that the great religious danger of our time and country is the danger lest men forget God; lest they lose sight of His claims on them, and of their duties to Him. It is a danger which, though peculiar to no period of history and to no race of mankind, in a marked degree besets an age which is characterised on the one hand by a wide diffusion of the comforts of life, and on the other hand by a well-nigh universal spirit of competition; those comforts of life in which so many find an adequate satisfaction of the only desires of which they are distinctly conscious; and a

* Sunday, September 27, 1903.

competition so keen that it seems to leave no leisure for thoughts of God, no residue of energy to be devoted to the exercises, whether interior or external, whether private or public, of religion.

We, indeed, who are spending the morning of our life within the walls of this College, or under the shelter of a devout Christian home, stand, please God, in no immediate danger of thus utterly forgetting our Creator. But we have the future to look to and provide for; indeed, that we may look to and provide for the future, is the very reason of our being here; and therefore, in this matter as in others, we must take account of what, in the future, might become a possibility even for us. Moreover, it is not the mere possibility of our coming to forget God in our after lives which claims our attention, but still more the evil effects of this forgetfulness, and it is by reason of these evil effects that the possibility deserves to be regarded as a very serious danger.

These evil results may be considered under two heads, as they affect, in the first place, one who is living in a state of sin, and secondly, as they affect a man who, though he is still in the state of sanctifying grace, has lost the fervour and the religious instincts of his boyhood.

Let us take then, first, the case of one who is in the state of sin; and we may depict him for ourselves under the most favourable light, from a worldly point of view. He is a young man of good family, or—

what in these days is often held of more account—he has a very satisfactory balance at his bankers'. All the comforts and most of the luxuries of our modern civilisation are at his command. He has his yacht and his motor-car, a house in town and a country seat either in possession or in expectation, his shooting-box and his grouse-moor. His every wish is carried out, or anticipated and forestalled, by a retinue of obsequious servants, or by the members of his own family, or by friends and hangers-on of one kind or another, whom for the time he has attached to himself, and who will remain attached to him as long as his purse is full and his prosperity lasts. He has won for himself a place in what is called "the best society." His opinions are listened to with deference; his criticisms on men and things are admired for their acuteness; his sallies of wit, not always of the cleanest, are received with outbursts of merriment, and his quiet humour, not always free from malice, with appreciative smiles. He is deemed excellent company, and, be it added, a most desirable match. Or, perhaps he has not quite all these things, but only some tawdry gilt-gingerbread semblance of them, such as his imperfect education and his not very exalted social position have enabled him to achieve. Perhaps he is only what Cardinal Newman, in one of his most eloquent sermons, described with fine scorn as "a bad imitation of polished ungodliness." Yet he is happy, as the crowd reckons

happiness, for he has not taste enough to discern the vulgar from the refined, paste from diamonds, the false from the true. And all the while, poor fool, whether hall-marked or base metal, under all his polish or pretence of polish, the canker of sin has eaten deep into his soul. He is a slave to sensual passion, and he is as proud as he is sensual. He is a prey to a mortal disease, and he knows it not. All the while (to use another comparison) he is walking blindfold on the brink of a precipice—and what is to save him, what is to hold him back from final and irremediable ruin, if he has forgotten God?

Or again, take a case not so bad—not nearly so bad—as this; the case of one who has not indeed offended God by mortal sin, at any rate since his last confession, but who is living carelessly and heedlessly, enjoying the pleasures and amusements of the world, or immersed in its business and cares. He has not yet sinned grievously, as we are supposing, because he has not yet been assailed by any grievous temptation; but who shall say how long this immunity will last? And what is to stay him and steady him, when at last the storm of temptation bursts upon him, if he has forgotten God; if his service of God has degenerated into a mere matter of outward respectability and conventional observance; if he has lost the sense of responsibility to his Creator, the remembrance of God's claim upon his dutiful service?

Here, then, are two reasons why it is of the most vital importance that we should keep alive in our hearts the remembrance of God, why we should, under the present most favourable conditions of our life, cultivate and cherish that remembrance and make it part of our very selves; viz., that we may be recalled from sin if we should have the misfortune to fall into it, and that by God's grace and mercy we may be kept from falling. "Son, remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

But precisely because there is every reason to hope that, with all the helps at our disposal, we do keep alive in our hearts this saving remembrance, therefore those who have us in charge may not unreasonably say to us, in the words of the Apostle: "We trust better things of you, and nearer to salvation,"* better things, and nearer to salvation, than those pictures of forgetfulness of God which we have been setting before our imagination by way of a salutary self-warning.

Nevertheless, it would assuredly not be wise to presume on our present dispositions, as though they alone were an adequate guarantee for the time to come. We have to form our plans, at least in outline, here and now, and to take such measures as are best calculated to ensure their being carried out when the need arises. Now among the many exercises of piety that are in use among us, there is

* Heb. vi. 9.

one, and perhaps only one, which we shall all of us, without exception, be able to continue hereafter, whatever the circumstances of our life may be. We shall not all of us be able to hear Mass daily, or to make daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament, or frequently to assist at Benediction, or even to receive Holy Communion as often as we have been accustomed to do so here at school. All these practices are most excellent, and, so far as circumstances may permit, are by all means to be kept up through life, and so, of course, are the special pious customs recommended to the members of our Lady's Sodality. But one or other of these things will prove impossible for many of us, and possibly all of them for some of us. There is, however, one thing which we can all do, and that is to be faithful to our morning and night prayers. Not, of course, that we should content ourselves with mere lip-service. But it would be a mischievous error to delude ourselves into thinking that the daily repetition of a set of words out of a prayer-book is an empty or superfluous ceremony. Even if our daily devotions should seem to us to be little better than this, this alone would be far better than nothing; for though we should be distracted during the greater part of the time, the very act of going on our knees, and of giving ourselves the trouble of reciting a form of prayer, is an act of homage to our Creator. It is a mark of respect which we pay

to no one else. It is a protest that we acknowledge His dominion over us, and that, however sinful we may be, we at least wish to keep alive in our hearts the remembrance of Him.

But, after all, something more than this is plainly most desirable, and something more is within the reach of all of us, if only we will make a determined effort. It is well, then, under our present most favourable conditions of life, to form the habit of praying from our hearts, and in order to form this habit it is very necessary that we should get a firm grip of the main points, so to say, of our daily prayers: in the morning, the earnest petition for grace to spend the day well and to resist temptation; at night the petition for grace to recognise our faults, the short examination of conscience, and, above all, the act of contrition; so that, if we cannot always follow every word with close attention, we may, at least, secure the fundamental disposition which the words, as a whole, express. Therefore, let us make it a matter of most serious endeavour to acquire and to cultivate this habit of praying earnestly, of putting ourselves on our knees, night and morning, not as though we were merely about to go through a more or less troublesome duty which cannot conveniently be shirked, but with the clear and definite intention of asking from the Giver of all good gifts something of which we stand in most urgent need, both for the present and for the future.

It would not, perhaps, be safe to affirm, though we may all of us have heard it said, that no one who has been faithful to his night and morning prayers was ever lost, or will ever be lost, eternally. No man living holds a commission to make such a promise, or to attach to the fulfilment of any external condition the grace of final perseverance. But it may be very safely said that if we make a fixed determination thus to remember God in our hearts at the outset and at the close of each day, we are taking the very best means to secure our eternal salvation. "Son, remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the days of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: They please me not."

II.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD*

"Walk before Me, and be perfect."—GEN. xvii. 1.

WE have considered and pondered over the very grave dangers that are involved in forgetfulness of God; and we have also reminded ourselves of a simple and elementary method or means of securing the remembrance of Him, viz., fidelity through life to our morning and night prayers. It deserves to be called an elementary method because, after all, to be faithful in saying our daily prayers, and habitually to say them from our hearts and not in a merely routine fashion, ought plainly to be regarded as a very minimum in the spiritual life; as the very least that we can do, and not by any means as the best that we should aim at and aspire to. From the occasional or periodical remembrance of God to that habitual and almost continuous sense of His divine presence, which is one of the most marked features of real holiness, is

* Sunday, October 4, 1903.

a very long step indeed. It is one that we cannot hope to take in a day, or in a week, or even in a year. But though we cannot expect to reach all at once the top of the ladder, or the summit of the mountain, and though many of us will never, perhaps, climb very high, that is no reason why we should stay contentedly at the bottom. If a boy cannot be *imperator* in his class, that does not prevent him from striving to rise from seventeenth to fifteenth, or from tenth to seventh. And so in the spiritual life, according to the measure of our gifts and opportunities, we must endeavour always to advance, or else we are sure to find ourselves falling below the level which we thought we had attained. In particular, as regards the sense of God's presence and of His absolute dominion over us, which is the very foundation of all Christian virtue, we cannot strive too earnestly that it may become more deeply implanted and rooted in our minds and hearts. For this is the way to true peace, and to that firmness and stability of character which we all need so much, and which we ought at least to begin to acquire even in our earliest youth.

As then, at the commencement of every prayer and exercise of devotion, the first thing to do is to "put ourselves in the presence of God," so, while we are still at the outset of our school year, we may very profitably endeavour, with more deliberation than usual, to bring His holy presence home to ourselves,

by recalling to mind some of the truths which we know about Him, and about our relations to Him and His claims upon us. As children we thought of Him, perhaps, as afar off, beyond the clouds and the stars of the firmament, and this even though we were familiar with the answer of the Catechism, that "God is everywhere." Since the days of our childhood, we have learned to understand better that He is indeed everywhere, and from eternity. Yet an illustration may help us to realise even so familiar a truth. A few years ago it happened that a new star, that is to say, a star hitherto unseen and unknown, was observed by astronomers in the constellation *Perseus*. Day by day, and week by week, the star, now catalogued as *Nova Persei*, increased in brilliancy, until it became plainly and conspicuously visible to the naked eye. And then it ceased to grow more luminous, and presently was observed to be on the wane; till finally, some nine months after its first discovery, it settled down to a fixed degree of brightness, too faint to be seen except with the aid of a telescope. Now the point of the illustration is this. From the complete absence of parallax, that is to say, of any observable variation in its apparent position as seen from various points in the earth's orbit, astronomers compute that this so-called "new star" must be so far away from our earth that it would have required at least one hundred, and perhaps three hundred years for its light—travelling

at the rate of 186,000 miles per second—to reach us. So that this "new star" was, in fact, of a quite respectable antiquity. What was first seen by us, here in our little world, in the year 1896, was an astral conflagration which really happened perhaps in the days of the French revolution, perhaps about the time of the landing of William III., possibly even in the time of Queen Elizabeth. It was an event, one, or two, or perhaps three centuries old, of which the tardy and belated news, borne with unimaginable speed upon the wings of light, reached us only the other day. Reduce years to days, and days to hours, and hours to minutes, and minutes to seconds, and then multiply the result by 186,000 miles, and you will have—so roughly that the calculation is to little purpose—the distance of that star which, one hundred, or two hundred, or three hundred years ago, blazed up for a brief period, and then (relatively speaking) "went out." But God knows its distance, to an inch; and He knew it all the time; for it was He who had put that star there; and He *is* there, no less truly than He is here.

And so it is with all the wonderful discoveries of science, all the unsuspected facts and laws of nature which observation and experiment, aided by our marvellous instruments of precision, have brought to light during the century that has so recently closed; all these were known to God and devised by God from the beginning; and their discovery is merely the

result of the use of God-given faculties upon matter created, and forces implanted, by God.

Again, we come perhaps one step nearer the truth when, instead of thinking of God as though He were (to speak crudely) extended all over space, and as enduring through all time, we think of all time and space as gathered up and focussed, so to say, into the burning-point of God's eternal *Here* and *Now*. For every place, however remote from every other place, is "here" to God, and every moment of time, every period of human history, every era of the long ages of which geology tells us—all are "now" to Him, whose name is: "I am who am";* to Him who said: "Amen, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."†

But we may help ourselves, perhaps, to better purpose by more homely considerations. It is God's earth on which we tread; God's air that we breathe; God's light by which we see; they are harmonies of God's making which charm our ears; it is the fleece of God's flock that clothes us; and stones from God's quarry that house us. All things, visible and invisible, from the smallest to the greatest, all are His, inalienably and absolutely His; and He is Lord and Master of them all. All human wisdom is as a faint ray from the brightness of His all-embracing knowledge; all human love as a tiny spark from the furnace of the love divine. Every gift that we

* Exod. iii. 14. † St John viii. 58.

receive, every service that is rendered us, every kindness that is shown us, all comes ultimately from Him; and to Him, ultimately, our thanks are ever due.

Or again, take the common comparison of the sponge in the ocean. It is not so penetrated with the water as we are penetrated by the presence of God. The water does not give its being to the sponge, as God gives us our being. God, the life of our life, the soul—as it were—of our soul (though not in the pantheistic sense); God, in whom we live, and move, and are. God above us, protecting us; God beneath, supporting us; God before us, beckoning us on; God at our back, bearing us up; God on our right hand, guiding and strengthening us; God on our left hand, warning us and warding off danger from us; God around us and God within us; God, from whom we came, and to whom, through whom, we go;—do we begin to understand what St Francis of Assisi meant when he cried: *Deus meus et omnia* —"My God and my all"?

And after all, whatever thoughts we may frame, whatever phrases we may devise, concerning God, we are but as little children lisping some word which is too difficult for them to pronounce;—and lo! it is God Himself within us who is framing our lips to their childish utterance. And when our hearts are warmed with vague desires of we know not what, of some happiness beyond all earthly joys, of a

love transcending all human experience—a love and a happiness which alone can satisfy us, and which, we know, will be sought in vain, apart from God; lo! again, it is the spirit of God within us that groaneth for us on our behalf "with groanings unspeakable." * And when we lift up feeble hands, groping for God, if, haply, like the woman in the Gospel, we may "touch the hem of His garment," † it is God Himself who lifts our hands and guides their groping, and then suddenly, and oh, so sweetly, makes us feel that all the while we have been clasped in the embrace of the everlasting arms.

God, then, is ever present with us, whether we remember His presence or not. And His presence is not otiose or to no purpose, like that of an idle spectator, but active and efficacious. He is with us and in us, ever seeing and judging all that we think, and say, and do. It is indeed a thought that should sober us and hold us in check, this remembrance that we carry our judge with us wherever we go. We may deceive our parents or superiors, our confessor, ourselves, for we are very blind even about ourselves; but God is not blind, and we cannot deceive Him. It is our interest, then, and it should be our happiness and our support, to remember God's presence, to remember it as often, nay, as constantly, as we can. And as His presence with us is not idle but effective, so our remembrance of His presence ought not to be

* Rom. viii. 26. † St Matt. ix. 20.

an idle remembrance, but should take effect in intimate converse with Him, and particularly in a complete self-surrender, in a firm determination to make His will the sole rule of our life and conduct.

O God, my Creator and Redeemer, my first beginning and last end; O God, all-present, all-seeing, all-judging, teach me to do in all things, wholly and solely, and strenuously, *what* Thou willest, *when* Thou willest, *as* Thou willest, and *because* Thou willest. "Our Father . . . hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

III.

SALVATION *

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"—ST MARK viii. 36.

A STORY is told of the Blessed John, Cardinal Fisher, that when he was in prison, by reason of having declined to take the oath of supremacy, his friends visited him and urged upon his consideration all sorts of reasons why he should comply with the demands of the king, Henry VIII. Wishing to be rid of their importunities, he told them that if they would come to him at a certain hour on a day which he named, he would follow their advice on condition that they should answer him just one question to his satisfaction. The appointment having been kept, the question he proposed to them was this: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" His friends retired, somewhat disconcerted; and he won his martyr's crown.

* Thursday, October 8, 1903.

And of the Blessed Sir Thomas More it is told how, when his wife came to him in prison on a similar errand of persuasion, he asked her how long she thought him likely to live, supposing that he obeyed the king's commands. She answered him that he might well live for twenty years at least. He quietly observed that if she had said twenty thousand years, there might have been some show of reason in her suggestion that he should yield; though, even then, 'twould be but a show of reason; for what were twenty thousand years of life on earth by comparison with eternity?

Other examples might be quoted from the lives of our English martyrs, in illustration of the firm grip which they had of those elementary and fundamental principles which may be called the common-sense of the spiritual life. We perhaps too easily take this spiritual common-sense for granted; that is to say, we sometimes too readily assume that we ourselves are guided by its principles; whereas, if we were put to the test of trials and temptations, a sad experience might show that we had but a feeble hold on them, or they on us.

"Salvation," the subject which we are now to consider, may be called an eminently common-sense topic. It is a topic on which no one has anything that is really new or original to say; and yet it by no means follows that we have nothing to learn about it. In matters of secular instruction we often find it

necessary to renew our acquaintance with elementary rules and principles; and when we have done so, we discover that they have applications which we had not thought of before. And so too it is in our spiritual life.

What, then, is "salvation"? It may be defined as the bringing of our soul safe through the vicissitudes and dangers of life, so that we may present it to God as an acceptable offering at the moment when our soul is separated from our body, and we go to appear before our Judge. All depends on the state in which we are found at that supreme moment. Then we shall understand that life here has been but a passing dream; that it is over now, once for all; and that our true life, our eternal life, is only beginning. We may die within a year from this present moment, or we may live to a great old age; in either case, we shall then see that the time has been short, when measured with eternity. One ant-hill may be three times as big as another, but both are small by comparison with the Himalayas or the Andes. We shall then see that nothing was worth striving for except what will count then; and that all those things which our fallen nature so inordinately craves, money and money's worth in pleasures and amusements, honour and success, and all the glitter of the world, are in themselves nothing worth, for in that hour they will not count at all; and the only thing that will count then, will be to have striven to do

God's will. We shall then understand, at last, that nothing is capable of satisfying the desires of the soul but God, who created the soul for Himself; and that if we have lost Him we have lost all. From that most terrible and altogether irreparable loss may God in His mercy deliver us.

And now the only sensible thing to do is to school ourselves through life to take the same view of things which we shall surely take the moment after we have closed the eyes of our body in death; when the eyes of our soul will open upon the endless prospect of eternity. Shall it be an eternity of unutterable joy and perfect happiness, or shall it be an eternity of indescribable misery? That is the one question that matters. What fools we should be seriously to care about anything else! And how much greater is our folly if we barter our prospects then for a momentary pleasure now. Suppose a man were sailing from Liverpool for America to-morrow morning to receive a rich inheritance, what would you think of him if he made a fuss about the colour of the cab in which he was to drive to the landing-stage? And if we suppose further that the failure to catch a particular vessel would result in the loss of the fortune in store for him; what would you say, were he to run the risk of missing the boat by wasting time in looking for a vehicle of the tint that was to his taste? And yet such (relatively speaking) are the trifles over which we grow excited during our journey through life;

such (worse still) the trifles for the sake of which we are ready to forego our eternal inheritance.

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" "The whole world." The words are so familiar to us that we do not always reflect that it is not the whole world, or half the world, or any appreciable fraction of the world, for which we may perhaps have been ready to barter our prospects of eternal happiness. No, the price of our sin was not "the whole world," but some little soiled and tawdry trinket which our enemy dangled before our eyes that he might entice us to our everlasting perdition. O that we could acquire some sense of the contemptible insignificance of the toys that take our fancy here, and hinder us from our goal! O that we could get a clear insight into the truth which may be expressed by the two words—to be understood, of course, not otherwise than as they are meant—"*nothing matters.*" That is to say, nothing really matters, nothing is of more than the most trivial importance, except so far as it concerns our eternal salvation. It matters not at all whether we are rich or poor; whether our home is a castle or a cottage; whether we are honoured or neglected and despised; whether we succeed or fail in our examination here, or in our profession in after life; whether we are big and strong or weak and sickly; whether we die young or live to be old men—all these things matter not at all except in so far as they

help or hinder us in the affair of our eternal salvation. All these things are *umbrae et imagines*, phantom shadows; and all human life is, or ought to be, in the phrase of the great Cardinal Newman, a progress or advance *ex umbris et imaginibus ad veritatem*, a gradual process of self-emancipation from the domination of deceitful appearances, that we may attain to the true liberty which they enjoy whose feet are firmly planted on the firm rock of truth. "The form and fashion of this world," says St Paul, "passeth away," or, more literally and correctly, "is passing away." It is ever passing, passing at this moment, passing at every moment, and our efforts to clutch it and hold it fast are as vain and futile as an attempt to stop yonder river in its course, by grasping in our hands its elusive waters. Of God alone, in His timeless eternity, can we hold a lasting possession, a possession that will still be ours, and of which we shall begin to know the meaning and the value, when all else has been left behind at the gates of death. And if we should lose that one true possession, there will be no remnant of our fortune with which to console ourselves. It will be an absolute, final, irrevocable bankruptcy. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

So much, then, for the present at least, on the importance of salvation, and we may now pass on to a second point, which is this, that the salvation

of each man's soul is his own peculiar and personal business. It is a point which we have doubtless often considered before, but which we do well again and again to call to mind. Each one of us, according to our differences and varieties of circumstance and of temperament, has to work out his own salvation. It is a thing which no one can do for us, which not even God will do for us without our co-operation, and which no one can prevent us from doing for ourselves. Others, of course, may in various ways help or hinder us in this great work, but they cannot even help us or hinder us, except so far as we are willing to accept the help or to yield to the hindrance. There is no stumbling-block in our path which is not capable of being turned into a stepping-stone to the kingdom of heaven. But there is also no stepping-stone which is not capable of being turned into a stumbling-block by our own misuse of it. Of our blessed Lord Himself it was said: "This child shall be set for the ruin and for the resurrection of many." For the fall of many as well as for the salvation of many, according as they should use or abuse their opportunity.

And therefore, while we avail ourselves to the utmost of all the external helps to salvation that are within our reach, we shall do well not to put our trust exclusively or even principally in them, but to set ourselves strenuously to the training of our own will. For it is on our will—with the assistance of

God's grace, which will never be wanting to us—that everything ultimately depends. In the matter of temporal success it is very far indeed from the whole truth to say—though it has been said by the greatest of our poets—that

> Man at some time is master of his fate ;

for life is full of chances and mischances (as we call them) which are entirely beyond our control, and which may upset all our calculations. But in the affair of our salvation, always assuming, of course, the help of divine grace, it is strictly true to say that man—every individual man—is master of his fate. For his final and everlasting destiny depends, not on external circumstances, or on anything whatsoever either within him or outside of him that is beyond his control, but simply and solely on the use which he makes of that power of choice which man cannot touch and God will not force, simply and solely on his fidelity to his own conscience, which men cannot penetrate, and which is the voice of God speaking in his heart, commanding, forbidding, exhorting, inviting, but never compelling. Under our present conditions of life so much is done for us, we are so guided and our actions are so regulated by our ordinary school discipline, that we might almost be tempted to find an excuse for thinking that nothing is left to our own initiative. But for this very reason it is the more necessary to remember that all these

outward helps and supports can in no wise exempt us from the task of painfully working out our own salvation. This is a burden of responsibility which we can by no means, and under no pretext, shift on to the shoulders of anyone else.

And a third point which it behooves us to consider is this, that salvation is a boon which admits of degrees. We must not think of heaven as though it were simply a great hall or palace or garden into which all those who are saved will be admitted on the same footing. Each man will be rewarded, "according to his works"; and it would be the very height of folly to let any particle of the reward escape us that is within our reach. But not only this. It is not merely that a man would be extremely foolish who should say: "All I want is to get to heaven, and I shall be quite content with a low place, provided that I can succeed in getting there at all." We must not make sure that we shall get there at all, unless we aim at the very best that is within our power. From the man to whom five talents are entrusted, other five, in the shape of good works, are expected. And if he should say to himself that he will be quite content with the reward that is accorded to the man of two talents, he runs a very serious risk of failing altogether.

And this consideration leads us to the counterpart of a principle which was expressed or summarised just now in the two words, "nothing matters,"

While in one sense it is true that "nothing matters," in another sense it is not less true that "everything matters." It is true that nothing matters by comparison with the supreme importance of salvation; but it is also true that everything matters in so far as there is no department, no circumstance, no incident of our lives, which is not capable of being turned to account for the attaining of that great end. The work of our salvation and perfection is to be carried out, not in the church and chapel alone, but in the schoolroom, the dormitory, the refectory, the play-room, and the playground. And this, not merely because the Commandments, which are chiefly prohibitions, must be observed in one place no less than in another, but also because in every place and in every occupation we may find opportunities for the exercise of the Christian virtues—humility, charity, purity, patience, fortitude, zeal for God's glory.

And, in conclusion, let us remember that if we seriously wish to be ready to give up anything that we like, and to face anything that we dislike, rather than offend God by grievous sin, we must keep ourselves in practice by self-denial and self-control in smaller matters, and even in things that are not the subject of any strict obligation. When we are travelling, and have reached the junction at which we must change our train in order to reach our destination, we get out at once; for if we did not, we should be carried many miles, perhaps many scores of miles,

out of our route. The voice of the official who shouts: "Change here for Blackburn," or whatever the station may be, is attended to—as a matter of course—with promptness and alacrity. But when we are engaged in some pleasant occupation, and our conscience whispers or cries in our ear: "Change here for the Kingdom of Heaven," we are not always so prompt. Our practical wisdom so often fails us in the affairs of our soul. Let the fruit of this meditation be, then, to fortify and establish us in the principles of spiritual common-sense. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

IV.

LIFE A PREPARATION FOR DEATH*

"Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding."—ST LUKE xii. 35, 36.

MEDITATIONS on death vary a good deal in their character. There is, for instance, the kind of meditation which dwells on what may be called the picturesque surroundings of death; which we are invited to begin by imagining ourselves on our death-bed, given up by the doctor, and so forth. And then there is the kind of meditation which insists on the terrifying aspects of death; which lingers on the agony of remorse that will seize upon the sinner in his last moments, and warns him, in language familiar to us all, that "if he has forgotten God during life, he will be forgotten at the hour of death." Now both these kinds of meditation, when skilfully and wisely treated, are good and useful. But both are apt to be not quite skilfully

* Recast from several short Meditations.

treated, and so to create a false impression. The surroundings of a death-bed are often very far from picturesque, even in the case of persons who have served God throughout life with great fidelity; while, on the other hand, in the case of those who die under what to the eye of faith are very painful circumstances, there is often a complete absence of any evidence of remorse or anguish of conscience. As a mere matter of taste, it is at least lawful to have a preference of what may be called our Lord's own meditation on death—or, rather, on life as a preparation for death—which may be read in St Luke's Gospel, chapter xii., in the 35th and following verses: "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands; and you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, that He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing, will minister to them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

Now, the first thing which strikes us when we read this parable attentively is, that the coming of the Lord is treated as an event full of joy rather than of terror. The disciples are to be like men who "wait in joyful expectation" of their Master's return;

for such would appear to be the force of the word used in the Greek text, προσδεχομένοις. To this same joyful expectation St Paul refers when he speaks of those "who love the coming of the Lord," * and again, when he speaks of himself as "looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"; † and St Peter exhorts his converts to live as men "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord." ‡ For although these passages have reference, primarily, to the coming of our Lord in His majesty to judge the world, yet for each one of us they have their application to the time of our own death, which will be for each one of us the day and the hour of the coming of the Lord.

It is plain, then, that so long as we live in the faithful observance of God's law, and so long as we are earnest and fervent in His service, we are not only allowed but encouraged to look forward to death as the moment of a most blissful meeting. It is that same blissful meeting of which we read in the "Commendation of the Departing Soul": "May Jesus Christ receive thee with a mild and joyful countenance. . . . Mayest thou see thy Redeemer face to face, and standing always in His presence, behold with happy eyes the most clear truth." This, surely, is a prospect, this a consummation, which we may well anticipate with joy, nay, as

* 2 Tim. iv. 8. † Tit. ii. 13. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 12.

the years roll by, with an ever-increasing eagerness.

But now we have to remind ourselves that there are certain conditions to be fulfilled in order that we may be entitled to take this happy and peaceful view of death; that we may be entitled to say—not in thoughtless bravado, but in the humility of faith—that death has no terrors for us. And these conditions are aptly figured in the parable which we are now considering. "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands." The girding of the loins is a similitude which is more than once used in Holy Scripture to signify the holy virtue of purity or continence; but here it plainly has a wider significance, as denoting detachment from the things of the world. That this is so, appears from the preceding context, where our Lord has been speaking principally, not of sins of the flesh, but of avarice. In the East, where the principal articles of clothing consist of a tunic and a cloak, a man when he goes to work lays aside his cloak ("takes off his coat," as we should say), pulls up his tunic a little, and tightens his girdle. And so the phrase "let your loins be girt" affords an apt figure of one who—laying aside all impediments to free action—stands ready for such work or service as may be required of him. What these impediments to freedom of action are in the spiritual life, we know very well. They are, not

so much material objects and possessions as our inordinate attachment to such objects and possessions. An inordinate attachment is one which interferes with the promptness and readiness with which we ought to lay anything and everything aside, whenever and in whatever degree our Master's service requires that we should do so. In our Lord's own day the Gospel made few converts among the rich and the prosperous. Why? Either because they would not give up those sinful pleasures which their wealth enabled them to enjoy, or because they were so wedded to their possessions and their prosperity, and to the respectability of their position, that they would not incur the odium of becoming members of what was despised as an obscure sect of enthusiasts. Sensuality and pride, self-indulgence and human respect, these are at once the consequences, and in their turn the causes, of an excessive attachment to the good things of the world. Now, our Lord does not ask all of us to give up all our possessions in order to follow Him more closely, and devote ourselves exclusively to His immediate and direct service. But He does ask all of us to be ready to put aside whatever proves to us an occasion of sin; He does ask all of us to be ready to give cheerfully in the cause of charity; He does ask all of us to regard our possessions as held in charge from Him to be used in accordance with His all-holy will. To be so disposed is to be

what is called "detached" from earthly things. This it is to have our loins girt; and this habitual disposition of detachment, with the continual self-control and frequent self-denial which it involves, is one of the conditions that entitles us to look forward with hopeful joy to the day and the hour of His coming.

But the picture is not yet complete. "Let your loins be girt," He says, "and lamps burning in your hands." The burning and shining lamp speaks to us of the light of faith and the fervour of charity, both of which are to be manifested in our actions. The world is described by St Peter as *locus caliginosus*—"a darksome place," * and so it is, darksome indeed as regards the knowledge of eternal truths. Men talk of the Dark Ages, by which they mean those centuries in which (as is alleged) neither art nor literature flourished, when science was yet unborn, and which has left the record of but few exploits of the kind that arrest the attention of mankind. But there are truths and principles of action which are more important in God's sight than all the monuments of art, all the products of literary activity, all the triumphs of science, all the statesmanship of political rulers, all the exploits of military commanders; and it is precisely these truths which are thrown into obscurity and forgotten when men find—or persuade themselves that they find—

* 2 Peter i. 19.

all that they need here below. And so it may happen that an age which makes a brilliant outward show is in God's esteem the darkest of all. But in the midst of this darkness we have to hold aloft the torch of faith, and to guide our steps by its flame, distrusting the fitful gleams of deceitful light with which the world would lead us astray. And we must keep alive the fire of charity—that is to say, of the love of God, and of man for God's sake. We must strive that the realities which lie beyond the gates of death shall be more real to us than the shadows among which we live; and we must take care lest by our negligence and want of vigilance the fervour of our love and devotion should grow cold, or should be extinguished by grievous sin.

So long, then, as our loins are girt, and the lamps are burning in our hands, we are entitled to cultivate the dispositions of men who wait in joyful expectation of their master's return from the wedding; hoping with a constant hope that then the gates of life everlasting will be thrown open to us, and that we shall then be bidden to rest from our labours, to sit down to the banquet at which the Master Himself will minister to us, and to enjoy forever the brightness of eternal light.

V.

A SUDDEN AND UNPROVIDED DEATH*

"But this know ye, that if the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open."—ST LUKE xii. 39.

IT is possible that some of us have never noticed the fact that the parable of the watchful servants (St Luke xii. 35-38), on which we have already meditated, is immediately followed by another very short parable, which is all contained in the single verse that has just been quoted; and that this second parable stands to the other in a relation of marked and sudden contrast. There we had set before us the joyful view of death which the faithful and earnest Christian is entitled and encouraged to take, on condition that he remains faithful and earnest. Here we are reminded that there is another side to the picture, and that death has its awful, its terrible aspect, and that its terrors are for those who live unprepared.

* Recast from several short Meditations.

That the contrast is intentional, that the similitude of the thief in the night is rightly held to represent the death of the unprepared and unrepentant sinner, may be gathered from the words of St Paul in the fifth chapter of the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. "But of the times and moments, brethren, you need not that we should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night. For when they shall say: Peace and security; then shall sudden destruction come upon them, . . . and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake *you* as a thief. For all you are children of light, and children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as others do; but let us watch and be sober."* Here, again, the Apostle is speaking of the solemn advent of our Lord as the Supreme Judge at the end of time; but again we legitimately make the application to ourselves; for the coming of Christ will be, for each one of us, the hour and the moment of death.

This, then, is the plain truth. If we be watchful, His coming will be a joyful meeting, to which we may look forward as to a welcome consummation. But if we be slothful, if we allow ourselves to fall into the deep slumber of mortal sin, and so spend our lives, then (since we cannot promise ourselves a death-bed

* 1 Thess. v. 1-6.

repentance) we have reason to fear that death will be for us like the coming of a thief in the night. And this fear, if we are wise, we shall ever hold in reserve. For "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"; * and however far we may advance—or think that we have advanced—in wisdom, we do well never to forget our earliest lessons.

"As a thief in the night." What are the characteristics of such a visitation? What are the points of comparison? In the first place, it is sudden and unexpected; in the second place, it is unwelcome and disastrous. It is sudden and unexpected. But, some one may say, do not bad men know that they are going to die just as well as good men? Can they not feel the encroachments of disease just as surely as the most fervent? In one sense, in the purely material sense, yes. But a story may illustrate the matter better than a formal explanation. A man lay dying of a long and painful illness. He was not a Catholic, but he knew enough of the Catholic religion to make him uneasy about his position. A priest of his acquaintance visited him often. When his pains and discomfort were great, he would tell his visitor that he was too ill to discuss theology, as he called it. When he felt a little easier he would assure him that he was on the way to recovery, and that it would be time enough to talk about those things when he got well. And so he died, in one

* Ps. cx. 10.

sense as suddenly and unexpectedly, notwithstanding his long illness, as if he had been killed in an accident. The story is not intended to suggest the conclusion that the poor man was lost eternally. God forbid! Every man will be judged according to his own lights, and it would be a rash and cruel judgment to assert that in this or any similar case the patient was fully conscious of a grave obligation to embrace the Catholic faith. But the incident may serve as an object-lesson concerning what may be called the unexpectedness even of expected death. Besides, the important thing is not the expectation of death as a physical fact, but the expectation of death as the supreme turning-point of life. A man may be waiting in the station for the arrival of a train, and the train may draw up at the platform precisely at the scheduled time. But if his worst enemy, whom he was not expecting, steps out of the train, the element of unwelcome surprise is not wanting. The unrepentant sinner may know that he will die within an hour. But if he does not know what death means for him, if he thinks it is a mere passing away into sleep, death in its reality will be as unexpected as the meeting with an enemy when one is looking out for a friend.

To pass, now, to our second point in the comparison of death to the coming of a thief. It is the trade and profession of a thief to rob men of their possessions, and that is just what death does in the case of one

who is unprepared. To bring this home to ourselves, we cannot do better than turn to another parable, which is read in the same twelfth chapter of St Luke's Gospel. It runs as follows: "And He spoke a similitude to them, saying: The lands of a certain rich man brought forth abundant fruits. And he thought within himself, saying: What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said: This will I do; I will pull down my barns and will build greater; and into them will I gather all things that are grown unto me, and my goods. And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer. But God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they ask thy soul of thee; and those things which thou has provided, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." *

"Thou fool!" In how many ways was this wretched man a fool! A fool because he mistook phantom goods for real. A fool because he mistook the pleasures of the body, eating, drinking, and making good cheer, for goods of the soul. A fool because, in the computation of his assets, he reckoned as an item that promise—for which he held no better security than his own worthless bond to himself—of many years in which to enjoy his wealth; and because in the same computation he

* St Luke xii. 16-21.

overlooked that bill—a bill of mortality payable at sight—that was out against him. A fool because he mistook those things for his own which he had but received as a loan or deposit from God; and because he had known no better use for those goods which he could not himself consume than to hoard them up in barns. Were there no poor, whose necessities he might have relieved out of his abundance, and whose prayers might have saved him from destruction? But no, he has no thought of others. He has not even a counsellor but himself, with whom he holds that foolish parley, "What shall I do?" and the rest. His words, addressed to himself, are a succinct expression of self-centred egotism. He speaks—and the emphasis of the repeated possessive pronoun is stronger in the Greek than in our English translation—he speaks of *my* barns, *my* goods, *my* increase, *my* soul. Ah! "*my* soul!" Can he even call his soul his own? It is those words, "my soul," that should remind us of the worst aspect of his folly, in that he forgot to look beyond the grave.

The human soul is likened, in the figurative language of our Lord's parables, to a coin or a sum of money, stamped with the image of God, and bearing His inscription; a sum of money given into our charge that we should keep possession of it so long as we are here on earth—("in patience," says our Lord, "shall ye possess your souls")—a deposit to be carried safe through the vicissitudes of life,

that it may be handed back, enhanced in value, to Him from whom we received it, at the hour when it shall please Him to demand it at our hands. Happy we if, with Jesus Himself, we can then say: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." But this miserable rich man of the parable has bartered away his soul; and when God says to him: "This night do they ask thy soul of thee," what answer can he make? He has laid up no store of treasure in the next world by alms-deeds and other good works; and the possessions which he has accumulated here he must leave behind. He has lost his all, and he has lost his soul! Poor fool!

Our Lord said to his disciples, and the words occur in this same twelfth chapter of St Luke: "Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth."* Our modern civilisation might boast, perhaps, that it has invented safes that are proof against the depredations of burglars. But the safe has not been and never will be invented that is proof against the great thief Death!

From a sudden and unprovided death, O Lord deliver us!

* St Luke xii. 33.

VI.

ST PETER'S FALL AND REPENTANCE*

"Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."—ST MATT. xxvi. 41.

FOR the practical purposes of the spiritual life, we may distinguish two kinds of fear—the fear of terror, and the fear of precaution.† In our meditations on hell, we strive from time to time to arouse in ourselves the fear of actual terror. Our petition, then, is: *Confige timore tuo carnes meas*—"Pierce, O Lord, my flesh with Thy fear."‡ As a mother might lead her child to the brink of some dangerous precipice in

* Friday, October 9, 1903.

† Other distinctions may be drawn, of a more strictly theological nature, which concern the motives of fear, and the like. With these I am not now concerned. The distinction here emphasised is simply psychological, but it is important, and it is recognised in common speech, though less markedly in English than in Latin. The verbs "vereor," "timeo," "pertimesco," "perhorresco," will at once occur to the mind. But it would be beside the purpose to insist here on minor gradations and shades of meaning.

‡ Ps. cxviii. 120.

order, as we might say in homely phrase, to give him "a good frightening," which might serve as a warning never again to approach that perilous edge except in her company, so from time to time we may ask our dear mother, Mary, to lead us by the hand as little children, and bid us look down into the pit of eternal punishment into which, if we were not careful, we should be in danger of falling. And, in particular, if ever we should have the misfortune to fall into grievous sin, we should do well to excite in ourselves once more that shudder of fear which once made us feel as though we could never again seriously transgress the law of God. *Confige timore tuo carnes meas*—"Pierce, O Lord, my flesh with Thy fear." That salutary shuddering and trembling fear should always be kept, as it were, in reserve, to be reawakened when the occasion may call for it.

But it is practically impossible, and it is certainly not intended, that this fear of terror should be habitually present to our minds. It would destroy the peace of our soul, and would unfit us for action. Moreover, we are told that "perfect love casteth out fear";* and these words must be understood, it would seem, of the fear of actual terror.† But there is another kind of fear which we ought never to be without, and that is the fear of precaution. There is a great difference between the agitating fear of a

* 1 John iv. 18.

† "Because fear," says the Apostle, "hath pain" (*ibid.*).

train which suddenly and unexpectedly rushes upon us as we are in the act of crossing the line, and the perfectly calm and peaceful fear which leads us to avoid crossing the line at dangerous points; between the sudden alarm which might seize us if we found that we had walked, unawares, between a firing party and the butts, and the wise precaution which would lead us on another occasion, to pay more attention to the red flag of warning. At present it may be profitable to devote some attentive consideration to the subject of this second kind of fear, so important for us all—the fear of precaution. And for this purpose, instead of dealing with the matter merely in the abstract and in theory, we may turn our thoughts to an object-lesson which is provided for us in the pages of the Gospel: St Peter's denial of our Lord, with its antecedent and attendant circumstances.

It was the night of his first Communion; we must not forget that. His feet had been washed by the Master's own hands; he had received the Body and Blood of his Lord; he had listened to the beautiful farewell discourse- of Jesus, which St John has recorded for us at such great length;* his heart was all aglow with ardent love. Deny his Lord! Deny him thrice! And on that night of all others! Impossible! "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee."† "Though all should be

* St John xiv.-xvii. † St Matt. xxvi. 35.

scandalised in Thee, yet not I."* But Jesus knew him far better than he knew himself; and the sad prediction was most sadly fulfilled—fulfilled to the letter: "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt thrice deny Me."†

What, then, was the story of his fall? In the first place, he was self-confident and boastful, when he should have been humble and diffident. He did not understand to how great an extent his present dispositions were dependent on his present circumstances, and how little he could rely upon it that those dispositions would remain unchanged amid quite other surroundings. And this is a point that we, in particular, do well to bear in mind. So long as we are at home or at school, surrounded by so many means of grace and so many helps to devotion, and on the other hand protected from so many external dangers and temptations, it ought to be easy for us to keep ourselves in God's holy grace, and to avoid mortal sin. But we shall do well not too easily to promise ourselves that it will be the same with us when these helps and external safeguards are removed. Nay, even here it may have happened that, notwithstanding all these advantages which we enjoy, we have nevertheless fallen; fallen, perhaps, many times. Therefore, while we trust, and trust firmly, that whatever our temptations may be, now or hereafter, the help of God's grace will

* St Matt. xxvi. 33. † St Mark xvi. 33.

not be wanting to us, let us look to it that our trust is in God, and not in ourselves.

In the second place, St Peter, not content with his impulsive self-confidence, must needs prefer himself to his brethren. "Though all should be scandalised in Thee, yet not I." He will not answer for anyone else. James and John, his own brother Andrew, and the rest; there was no telling what they might do. He knew their little weaknesses. But, after the manner of untutored human nature, he was blind to his own. Once more, then, let us beware of despising or looking down upon others, or passing any sort of judgment on them. If we know but little of ourselves, we know much less of them. Though we may not always be able to justify their outward acts and words, we know hardly anything of their motives, and nothing at all of the interior temptations and difficulties with which they have to contend; and the only safe plan — if we must busy our thoughts about our neighbours—is very humbly to acknowledge that if we had the same difficulties and temptations to contend with, we should probably be no better and perhaps much worse than they.

Self-confident and boastful, it is no matter for surprise that St Peter should, in the third place, have neglected the Master's warning: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." No doubt he thought the counsel excellent in a general way;

but he did not see its urgency just then. Perhaps he thought it very suitable for Andrew and the others, but he failed to perceive his own need of it. And so it is, too often, with us. Again and again we are warned, in public or in private, by those who have charge of us. Perhaps we deliberately slight the warning; it seems so stale, so old-fashioned, so conventional, a mere fashion of preachers and teachers, of which no serious account need be taken. Or we tacitly assume, in the case of public utterances, that they are not meant for us in particular; the cap seems so admirably to fit this one or that among our companions. Or again, we assent, after a limp and languid fashion, to the truth of what is said, as applicable indeed to ourselves no less than to others; but we do not give ourselves the trouble of seriously thinking the matter over, and of seeing what is its practical bearing on our own individual life, on our own particular circumstances. In other words, we listen but we do not meditate; we hear what is said, but we will not take pains like Mary—our model in meditation—to ponder in our hearts the words that have fallen on our ears.

And now, what were these warnings that St Peter neglected, to his own calamitous loss? "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Let us mark well those words: "Lest ye *enter* into temptation." Sometimes, of course, a strong temptation will suddenly assail us through no fault of our own;

and then, if we have been habitually faithful, habitually on our guard, we may trust that God's grace will enable us to resist it. But we have no right, of our own free will and choice, to come to hand-grips with the tempter. It is our duty, as far as possible, to keep our foe at arm's length. An army on the march does not willingly fall into an ambush, but sends out its scouts to see that the way is clear; and, if the enemy's forces are detected in the distance, they are attacked, whenever it is possible, at long range. Now, in order that in our spiritual warfare we may put in practice this rule of common-sense, two things are necessary, prayer and watchfulness, the use of the means of grace and the avoidance of dangerous occasions. And it was because, on that fateful night, St Peter neglected the means of grace, and neglected the most obvious safeguards, that he fell.

Jesus was in an agony of prayer in the garden; yet Peter slept. Jesus came, and roused him. "Couldst thou not watch one hour with Me?"* Yet Peter slumbered again. Had he but prayed that night, had he but pondered in his heart his Master's words of warning, he might have had some inkling of the trial that was in store for him. But Peter slept.

And then again, a few hours later, when Jesus stood before the High Priest, falsely accused and

* St Matt. xxvi. 40.

basely ill-treated, where was Peter? He who had been so bold in professing his readiness to die with his Master, he who had been so prompt to draw his sword in his Master's defence, where was he now? Surely we should expect to find him at Jesus' side. Surely we should expect to hear him demanding to be allowed to give evidence in His favour, evidence that should put to silence the false witnesses who were testifying against Him. And if he had been himself smitten into silence, if that blow that fell upon the mouth of Jesus had fallen instead upon him, surely it had been a glorious stroke, and he would have had reason to rejoice then, as he learned to rejoice later, that he was counted worthy to endure something for his Lord.* But Simon Peter had much to learn before he was to attain to that kind of holy joy. He was not at his Master's side. He was, as the Evangelists tell us, with all the emphasis of repetition, in the midst of the soldiers and servants of the High Priest, standing by the fire in the courtyard of the house, "and warming himself."† Jesus is undergoing His trial, and Peter is warming himself. A few hours before, his eyes were heavy, and he slept. Now he is cold, and he warms himself at the fire. He is self-indulgent; he is off his guard, and he is in most undesirable company. Can we wonder that he fell? And what

* Acts v. 40, 41.

† St Mark xiv. 54, 67; St John xviii. 18, 25.

a fall! The cock crew, and yet he persisted in his denial, cursing and swearing that he knew not the man.*

The application of the lesson to ourselves ought to be easy. We have only to look back upon the months and years that are gone by, and see for ourselves whether, when we have fallen into grievous sin, or when we have been in imminent danger of so falling, our case has borne some resemblance to that of St Peter. If we examine ourselves carefully, we shall find that neglect of prayer and rashness in courting the occasions of sin, neglect of the means of grace and neglect of safeguards, have been the causes or predisposing antecedents of our misfortune. And having seen this clearly, it is the business of each one of us to make his own resolutions for the future.

"And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter."† So we read in St Luke's "Gospel of Mercy." "And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter, and Peter, going forth, wept bitterly." O Jesus, that I might see Thy face! O that I might look up into Thy sacred eyes, full of compassionate reproach, that the sight of them might smite me to the heart with keen compunction! O Jesus, look upon me as Thou didst look on Peter, that I, too, with Peter, may go forth and weep bitterly over my senseless folly and my base ingratitude to Thee!

* St Mark xiv. 68, 71. † St Luke xxii. 61.

VII.

A MODEL PENITENT*

"Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."
—St Luke vii. 47.

Of all the touching passages which are peculiar to St Luke's Gospel—the Gospel of Mercy, as it has been aptly called—none is more touching than that which records the conversion of the sinful woman who is commonly (and not without good grounds) identified with St Mary Magdalen. The narrative is indeed so striking and remarkable that it may be well to read it through before proceeding to make our reflections upon it. With one or two slight alterations of the Douay Version, made for the sake of adhering more closely to the Greek text, it runs as follows:—

"And a certain man of the Pharisees prayed Jesus that He would eat with him. And He went into the house of the Pharisee and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman that was in the city, a sinner, when

* Saturday, October 10, 1903.

she knew that He sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and standing behind at His feet, weeping, she began to bathe His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kept kissing them, and anointed them with the ointment.

"And the Pharisee who had invited Him, seeing it, spoke within himself, saying: This man, if he were a prophet, would surely know who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner.

"And Jesus, answering, said to him: Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee. But he said: Master, say it. [And Jesus said:] A certain man had two debtors; whereof the one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which, therefore, of the two loveth him most?

"But he said: I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said to him: Thou hast judged rightly. And turning to the woman, He said unto Simon: Dost thou see this woman? I came into thy house; thou gavest no water for My feet; but she with her tears hath bathed My feet, and with her hair hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased from kissing My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed My feet. Wherefore, I say to thee: Her

many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less.

"And He said to her: Thy sins are forgiven thee.

"And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves: Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

"But He said to the woman: Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace." *

The scene that is here set before us is easily reproduced in the imagination. The house is built round a courtyard. The great gates or doors opening on the street stand wide open, and the doors of the principal chamber or dining-hall on the opposite side of the quadrangle are wide open too; for any notable exercise of hospitality in the East is a kind of semi-public function which the passer-by may at least witness, even if he be not an invited guest. Within the dining-hall the host and his guests recline on couches. They have removed their shoes or sandals before the meal, and their feet are on the edge of the couches furthest from the table. Then details may be sufficient to explain how Magdalen (for we may assume that it was no other than she) had access to the room and to the feet of Jesus.

And now, if it helps us to divide our meditation

* St Luke vii. 36-50.

into distinct points, three such points are provided, or rather suggested, by the narrative, which sets before us three principal personages, St Mary Magdalen, Simon the Pharisee, and our blessed Lord Himself.

I. In Magdalen we have the example of a model penitent, and it will be to our profit to study the characteristic features of her repentance.

1. In the first place, it is prompt; that is to say, it is the outcome of a prompt response to the call of grace. "And a certain woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she heard that He sat at meat in the Pharisee's house";—have we ever thought what would be the natural conclusion from this promise? What would human prudence have said? Prudence would surely have said: "Wait! Wait for a more suitable occasion. Wait till the Master is alone. Do not put yourself to shame. Do not put Him to shame. Wait till to-morrow. Wait!" Such would have been the counsel of mere worldly wisdom. But she is led by an instinct higher and more peremptory than any such counsel. She is obeying an instinct of divine grace, which teaches her many things. It teaches her the greatness of her need, for that she is labouring under the intolerable burden of sin. It teaches her the urgency of her need, which will admit of no procrastination. It teaches her that no time can be inopportune, no occasion unsuitable, for seeking

access to Him who Himself came to seek and to save that which was lost. And so, importunate yet most opportunely, she betakes herself to His feet. For He had entered the Pharisee's house, not to taste of dainty meats, nor to drink of costly wines, but to satisfy the thirst of His Sacred Heart with the tears of the penitent; precious drops which fall not like the rain from heaven to earth, but rise up from earth to heaven, and are as a loud cry in the ear of God. Her repentance, then, is prompt, and such should ours be; for He who to-day gives us the grace to repent, has not promised that the grace which we neglect to-day will be available to-morrow; nor has He even promised us that morrow which we promise ourselves when we put off our return to Him.

2. And secondly, her repentance is bold. *Frontosa ad peccandum, frontosior invenitur ad pœnitentiam*, says St Augustine. "She who had been bold and shameless in her sin, is found yet bolder and more regardless of shame in her repentance." Her sin had been notorious, her repentance should be not less notorious. And so she goes boldly in, caring nothing at all for the proud scorn of the Pharisee, for the muttered words and meaning looks of the Pharisee's guests, for the coarse jests and gibes of bystanders and servants. Of what account are these if only she may cast herself at the feet of her Saviour? A model penitent is she in the boldness

of her repentance. And here, too, may be a lesson for us, that we be not easily deterred by those obstacles which the observances and conventions of social life occasionally put in the way of our access to the Sacrament of Penance. It is worth any effort, either when we have sinned, or in order to keep ourselves safe from serious falls, to betake ourselves to the feet of our Saviour (in the person of his unworthy minister) in that sacred tribunal.

3, 4. And her repentance is further characterised by two other marks which may conveniently be coupled together, as they are coupled by our Lord Himself, viz., her deep humility and her lavish love. It is He who speaks her eulogy, contrasting these qualities with the proud niggardliness of the Pharisee. He, it is to be presumed, had fancied that he was conferring an honour on Jesus, by extending to Him the condescension of his patronage; nor had he felt called upon to practise, on His behalf, those observances which were the due of a distinguished and honoured guest. "Thou gavest no water for My feet." Our Lord does not reproach him with not having himself performed the menial service of the *pedilavium*; but he had not even sent his servants to wash the travel-stained and weary feet of the great Teacher. But what he had omitted to do, even by the hands of a domestic, in his own house, she had come in to supply; bathing the feet of Jesus with no common water, but with her own tears of compunction,

and wiping them with her hair. Again: "Thou gavest Me no kiss." That is to say, Simon, the Pharisee, had not received Jesus with the accolade of honour and respect which might have been looked for; "but she, since she came in, hath not ceased from kissing"—not the sacred countenance of our Lord, but—"My feet." And yet again: "My head with oil thou didst not anoint," according to the custom of the East; "but she," not content with cheap and common oil, "with ointment," precious ointment such as alone would be stored in an alabaster flask, "hath anointed"—once more, not "My head," but—"My feet." Such were the outward manifestations of deep humility and of lavish love which our Lord Himself invites us to admire in this model penitent.

5. Nor must we omit to notice another point in connection with her repentance, a point which the great Fathers of the Church did not fail to observe and to emphasise many centuries ago. She makes reparation "in kind." Her eyes, her hair, her ointment, these had been among the instruments of her sin, they stand as symbols of the arts wherewith she had lured men to destruction; and behold, they are now made the instruments—so to say—of her repentance. And here we may find a very practical lesson. If we would lay to our hearts this principle of striving to make reparation in kind, it would give a new meaning to the commonest actions of our lives.

Have we sinned with our tongue? Here and now let us form our intention of making reparation for those sins by our observance of silence; by the use of our tongue in speaking or singing the praises of God in our public prayers and services; by kind words when occasion offers of speaking them. Have we sinned with our eyes? There is no use of our eyes in God's service, whether in study or in prayer (for it is often irksome to restrain the wandering of our eyes in church or chapel, or to use a prayer-book in order to check the wandering of our thoughts), there is nothing of all this that cannot be offered to our Lord in reparation for our past offences, and that will not gladly be accepted by Him if thus offered.

6. And then, lastly,—lastly, that is to say, as concerns the penitent—it must not be forgotten that Magdalen, at the feet of Christ, is a type or symbol of the Church in her humble service of the poor. It is but a far-off echo of the words of the early Fathers, a carrying forward of an age-long homiletic tradition, to say that, as the Church at large is the mystical Body of Christ, so the poor, the despised, the afflicted, are as the feet of that mystical Body. "We wash the feet of Jesus with our tears," says St Augustine, "when we sorrow in sympathy with the griefs of the poor; we anoint them with ointment when we bestow of our superfluities to relieve their distress." And our attitude in dealing with the poor ought to be the attitude of Magdalen at the feet of her Saviour and

ours; the attitude, not of lofty condescension, but of genuine reverence. Those who know the poor best would tell us that, if we can but learn to treat them with reverence for Christ's sake, we shall find, in more instances than we should have anticipated, that they have qualities and virtues which, on their own account, entitle them to our most sincere respect.

II. And now, if we need more matter for our meditation, let us turn for a brief moment to the Pharisee. Leaving aside other reflections which might suggest themselves, it may be sufficient to consider only our topic in this connection, viz., the Pharisee's rash judgment. He does not seem to have uttered a word, but his thought—which Jesus read—is set forth by the evangelist. "This man, if He were a prophet, would surely know who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, that she is a sinner." If we look a little closely into the matter, we shall find that in that one little sentence are contained no less than six mistakes, which it may be worth while to enumerate: (1) "This man, if He were a prophet";—mistake the first; for the Pharisee judges Him to be no prophet to whom all the prophets owed their inspiration. (2) "If He were a prophet He would surely know," and so forth. He is wrong, in the second place, in his conception of the prophetic office. It was not the privilege or the function of prophets, as such, to read the secrets of hearts, but to declare the message—whatever it

might be—that had been entrusted to them by God. (3) "He would surely know;"—mistake the third, for he judges that our Lord does not know "who and what manner of woman this is." He is wrong, then, about our Lord's knowledge. (4) And fourthly, he most grievously mistakes the dispositions of our Lord's Sacred Heart, for he judges that if He knew who and what this woman was (ποταπή, as who should say, "what a creature!"), He would not suffer her to approach Him. (5) And he is wrong, in the fifth place, in his interpretation of the law, for he judges that Jesus *ought not* to suffer the approach of one so deeply contaminated. (6) And lastly, he is mistaken in his estimate of the woman herself, for he adjudges her a sinner, who is, indeed, a forgiven penitent. O how easily, and how far, and in how many ways, shall we be led astray if we allow ourselves to indulge the miserable and mischievous habit of judging the actions and the motives of our neighbour.

III. But enough of the Pharisee. Let us rather turn our gaze, in conclusion, on our dear and merciful Saviour, who is, after all, the central figure in this beautiful picture which we have been studying together. Mark how His gentleness and His tact (if one may use the term without irreverence) are shown in His every word. It is a severe rebuke which He had to administer to the Pharisee; yet note how delicately it is conveyed. Simon had judged Him incapable of reading the thoughts of men. Jesus

answers this unexpressed judgment by showing that He has read his thoughts. And the parable which follows: how laudatory it is of Magdalen, how gently reproachful towards Simon. The debtor to whom more had been forgiven is pronounced to have had a stronger motive for loving his merciful creditor. But the penitent has, as it were, anticipated her pardon with her love: "Her many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." But in the case of the Pharisee there is no such inversion of terms. The words, "to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less," are, so far as the form and structure of the sentence go, in the nature of an excuse; as though it were no matter for surprise if he who had a less pressing motive for gratitude should be less fervent in his love. But, under cover of this excuse, such as it is, Jesus gives him reason to ponder the question whether less has been forgiven him because he has really sinned less, or whether, indeed, for lack of humble repentance, he has not been forgiven at all.

St Luke's Gospel of Mercy is full of pointed contrasts, and of these not the least striking is that between the humble penitent and the proud and hard-hearted Pharisee. Can we doubt which of these two we should be best pleased to resemble? Can we hesitate to cast ourselves at His feet with Magdalen, that with her we may hear, as from His very lips, those words—so full of consolation—"Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

VIII.

THE LOVE OF GOD: VOCATION *

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."—DEUT. vi. 5; ST MATT. xxii. 37.

THE love of God, and of our fellow-men for God's sake, is, as we all know, "the great commandment of the law." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart," and the rest. This is, in substance, a precept the observance of which (with repentance for past sin, which it virtually includes) is essential to salvation. On the other hand, the highest sanctity cannot reach beyond the perfect realisation of the ideal expressed in the precept. The most ordinary Christian is bound, in a very true sense, to love God "with his whole heart"; and the greatest saint that ever lived could do no more than to love God "with his whole heart."

It is plain, then, that the love of God admits of degrees; and since all our spiritual progress may

* Recast from several Instructions.

be reduced to advancement in the love of God, it is useful to strive to form some definite notions on the subject.

1. "If ye love me," said our Lord to His disciples, "keep My commandments."* This, which we may call "effective love," is the foundation of all. Religion does not consist, principally and fundamentally, in words, and feelings, and outward observances (though these have their place, and are necessary as helps), but in the interior obedience of the heart, in the resolute submission of the will to God's law. "Not every one that saith to Me: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."† This obedience must be entire. It will not do to say that we will keep eight or nine of the commandments, and reserve to ourselves the right of transgressing the other one or two; or to observe the precepts of the Decalogue, and to neglect the commandments of the Church. And again, our obedience, as a rule or principle of conduct, must be supreme. It will not do to say that we will obey the commandments unless it hurts too much to do so, or that we will not break them unless some one should make it well worth our while. The martyrs suffered death rather than offend God; and in doing so they were only acting up to a principle which our Lord Him-

* St John xiv. 15. † St Matt. vii. 21.

self had repeatedly and most explicitly laid down. Now it is plain that a man who habitually lives in the disposition that for no consideration whatever would he offend God grievously, can truly be said to love God with his whole heart. And this degree or kind of love is necessary for salvation.

2. But we ordinarily associate with the word "love" some degree of feeling and emotion. And although feelings and emotions are not of the essence of religion, and would not of themselves (any more than mere words) be sufficient to secure our salvation, yet it is well that our feelings too should be enlisted in the service of God. And, unless they are so enlisted, at least to some extent, our obedience is apt to fail under the stress and strain of temptation. Moreover, it is plain that God wishes to be loved not only with the effective love of the will, but with the "affective love" of the heart. Already, in the Old Testament, we find expressions which point to this affective love. "Taste and see how sweet the Lord is,"* cries the Psalmist, and (not to multiply examples) the chosen people of the Jews are repeatedly spoken of as the spouse or bride of God Himself. Indeed, we may say with confidence that this desire of God for our heart's love was one of the reasons why the eternal Word not only became Man, but chose to live such a life and to die such a death as we know Him to have lived and died. He knew how difficult

* Ps. xxxiii. 9.

it is for us to form an idea of God, as God, and of His attributes; how almost impossible to keep such an idea before our minds; how difficult, again, to love with the love of affection a Being of whom we cannot think except by means of abstract notions. The effort to do so is like trying to speak a language with which we are imperfectly acquainted. But God in His condescension would, as it were, translate His attributes into the language of human life and action. He would be born of a human Mother; and who does not know how much of tender devotion and piety among Christians is due to this blessed choice? He would take a human Heart to love us with. Not content with telling us that the lot of the poor and the mourner is blessed, He would enrol Himself formally in the ranks of the poor, and would be Himself a Man of Sorrows. He would be born in a wayside stable, that all might have easy access to Him. He would lie as an infant in His crib, that children might learn to love Him. And then, after all the moving events and incidents of His life here on earth, He would die hanging aloft upon the Cross, that He might draw all hearts to Himself. Truly, in the words of Bishop Hedley, "Jesus Christ makes worship easy"; and one of the ways in which He makes worship easy is by providing great abundance of fuel wherewith to kindle the flame of affective love.

3. But there is a higher kind of love than this, and

the recognition of the possibility of this higher kind of love, even for us, may have a most important bearing on our choice of a state of life. The Cross of Christ is not so limited in its power that it can merely arrest attention, or evoke reverent and affectionate sympathy, or awaken feelings of compunction. From the crib to the cross Jesus was engaged in doing a great work: a work which is still going forward in the world. Now, friendship or love, if it rises beyond the level of mediocrity, is not content with avoiding offence to the person loved, or with affectionate and tender feelings. It leads us to interest ourselves in the undertakings of our friend, and this in no merely speculative and platonic fashion, but in such practical sort as to desire, if it be possible, to share in those undertakings, and to help with all our power in carrying them through. And, in fact, our Lord does invite men to share in His great work, and He has made it possible for us to help Him in carrying it through. "If you love Me," he says in effect to St Peter, "feed My sheep." * And quite apart from the dogmatic bearing of these words, as pointing to the unique position which St Peter was to hold in the Church, they express a principle which is in some degree applicable to all of us, and is applicable in a special sense to a favoured few. "If you love Me, feed My sheep." The test of love, of the higher grades of love, is

* St John xxi. 15-17.

readiness to co-operate in His great work for the salvation of mankind. Are we ready? Are we willing? This is a point which it behooves us seriously to consider; and a point which many persons do not consider half seriously enough.

But some one may say: "Oh, that is all very well for people who have vocations to the priesthood; but I have no vocation." Perhaps not; and he would be a very foolish director or adviser who should attempt to induce anyone to take up so grave a responsibility as that of the priesthood or the religious life if he had no vocation for it. But what, after all, is a vocation? The terms of our Lord's invitation would seem to be general: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow Me."* And again, when He speaks of the counsel of holy chastity, He says: *Qui potest capere, capiat*—"Let him take it who can."† We must not wait for an express messenger from heaven, or a special invitation sounding audibly in our ear. Fitness for the work is the main thing; and (assuming the absence of insurmountable obstacles) fitness for the work and a genuine desire to undertake the work are, in ordinary cases, the two elements that go to the making of a vocation; and the desire may be regarded as the special and particular sign of the working of divine grace in the soul, assuring one, who is otherwise fit, of God's call

* St Matt. xix. 21. † St Matt. xix. 12.

to himself individually. Now from what has been said it is plain that a vocation does not always come to a man, as it were, ready made. It is not like a parcel tied up, and addressed, and laid on our table. Rather it is like a delicate and tender seedling which, if we tend it carefully, will grow to maturity, but, if we neglect it, will wither away and die. It is plain that one who is not yet fit may render himself fit; and, on the other hand, that one who has all the promise of fitness, may, by wasting his time, by indulging frivolous habits, or by yielding to grosser temptations, very effectively spoil his own character, and quite disqualify himself for the work of the priesthood.

And so, too, as regards the desire to serve God in the priesthood or in the religious state. It may be neglected and allowed to languish till it dies away altogether; or it may be cultivated by meditation and prayer till it matures into a firm determination. And by the same means it may often be acquired where not even the germ of it might have been previously detected. Practically, the course to be followed when we are considering the question of our state of life is, first, to pray earnestly, and seriously to consider the true end and purpose of human life; secondly, to write down our reasons on either side, and carefully to ponder them; then to form our decision, at least provisionally, and again commend it to God in prayer; and, finally, to ask advice. And it is to

be observed, that the stage at which advice is, ordinarily speaking, most likely to be profitable, comes *after* and not *before* we have taken the trouble to think the matter out for ourselves; and—be it repeated—in thinking the matter out for ourselves, we should by no means grudge the use of pen and paper. "Writing," says Bacon, "maketh an exact man"; and it will not unfrequently be found that reasons, which had loomed large in our imagination, shrivel up into very modest dimensions, and look rather foolish, when the attempt is made deliberately to write them down.

It may seem that we have wandered a long way from the subject with which we started, viz., the love of God. Yet it is not so if it be true—as it unquestionably is—that the supreme test of love is generosity towards Him whom we love; and if the best kind of generosity is willingness to give up all things, including our own liberty, for His sake, in order that we may follow Him—if He should be pleased to allow us so to do—even in much labour, and in many privations and sufferings, until death. For of this we may be sure, that a desire for the priesthood or the religious life is not quite genuine—or, at best, not quite fully mature—unless it includes a determination to face, for Christ's sake, a good deal that is unpleasant to nature and contrary to our inclinations. But we may be sure of this, too, that, notwithstanding all hardships, disappointments, or

drudgery, incident to his condition, there is no happiness in this world like that of the man who knows that, from morning till night and from year's end to year's end, he is engaged in carrying out, to the best of his ability, the work which Christ our Lord came on earth to do.

But it would be a very great mistake to suppose that this higher kind of the love of God, which manifests itself in a desire to imitate our Lord as closely as possible, and to share His work, is to be found only among priests and religious, or that it is not attainable in its degree by every one of us. Many circumstances may concur to make it clear that any particular person is not called to the priesthood, or to the religious state. He may have the duty of supporting, or helping to support, his parents or other members of his family; he may be physically unfit, or unsuited by natural disposition, for the duties of a priest. But no disability, financial, physical, intellectual, or moral, can hinder him from loving our Lord with all his heart. No obstacle can prevent him from taking, as his rule of conduct, not the law of parsimony, the principle of the man who asks: "How little can I do—what is the least that I must do—in order to save my soul?" but the law of generosity, the principle of the man whose question is always: "Is there anything more that I can do to please our Lord better, and to follow Him more closely than I have hitherto done?" There is

plenty of work for God and the Church to be done by laymen; and the law of generosity is aptly expressed by our Stonyhurst motto: *Quant je puis* —"As much as I can." Whether we be priests, or whether we be laymen, in generosity towards God, at whatsoever apparent or momentary cost to ourselves, lies the secret of true joy and peace. *Quant je puis;* not "as little as I am obliged," but "as much as I can." *

* *Quant je puis* was originally the motto of the Shireburns, whose family seat was Stonyhurst. It still serves as the College motto.

IX.

HEAVEN (1)*

"Well done, good and faithful servant, . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—ST MATT. xxv. 21.

THERE are three great festivals occurring in the course of the Christian year which are especially calculated and intended to raise our thoughts heavenwards, viz., those of the Ascension of our Lord, of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of All Saints. And the last-named seems in some sense to bring heaven nearer to us than either of the other two, inasmuch as the saints, while they lived, were far less removed from our own conditions of life than were our Divine Saviour and His Blessed Mother. At any rate, there is no need to go in search of reasons why it is profitable to meditate on heaven, or why the thought of heaven may well find a special place in our minds at this present season.

Our ideas of the happiness of heaven are, as a

* Sunday, November 8, 1903 (Octave of All Saints' Day).

rule, so vague, that we do not think about it as much as it would be good for us to do. For this, indeed, there is some excuse. It is impossible, and it is not intended, that we should be able to form such a notion of heaven as we might be able to form of China or Japan, or Switzerland or Norway, or of any other country which we have never visited, but of which we may have seen pictures or read descriptions. There are no pictures of heaven, and no descriptions of it; and it is impossible that there should be. If an angel could appear among us in human form, and speak our language, he could no more describe heaven to us, as it is, than one of us could describe the colours and the appearance of a landscape to a man who had been blind from his birth. The blind man would lack the faculty which is needed for the right understanding of our works. But in the case of the angel trying to describe heaven, not only should we lack the faculty to understand what he might be imagined to say, but, since all speech of men has reference, ultimately, to some kind of human experience in this life, no human language could supply him with words in which to express himself.

Shall we, then, be content to take it simply on faith that the happiness of heaven is something immeasurably greater and better than anything which we can imagine or conceive; or to say, with St Augustine: "Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart can find no rest until it rest in Thee"?

For some purposes, and under ordinary circumstances, this may indeed be the wisest thing that we can do. We know enough of God's goodness to trust Him implicitly, and not to be over-curious as to what He has in store for us. This is a most commendable disposition, and one that has the special approval of our Lord Himself, as shown by His implied approval of the conduct of those labourers who went into the vineyard content to take the Master at His word: "That which shall be just I will give you." *

Yet it is well, occasionally, to look more closely into the matter. For there is more to be known, and more that we are intended to know, about the happiness of heaven than we might be inclined to suppose; and although we cannot form to ourselves any picture of that which "eye hath not seen," and could not see, yet we can and ought to help ourselves by means of comparisons and analogies, such as are, in fact, set before us in the pages of Holy Writ. The happiness of heaven is repeatedly referred to by our Lord Himself in the phrase, "eternal life." It is a phrase which occurs, again and again, in fact, some thirty times, in St John's Gospel, of which, indeed, it may be said to indicate or express the principal theme. Eternal life! As the life of a sentient animal is of a higher order than that of a plant or tree; as the life of a man is superior to that of the mere animal; so also, but with an inconceivably

* St Matt. xx. 4.

greater range of difference, is the life of the blessed in heaven higher and better than our life here on earth; higher and better in every particular kind of excellence among those which—to use a homely phrase—make "life worth living." Or again, our present state of existence may be likened to that of the grub or chrysalis, awaiting, yet silently preparing, for its transformation into the perfect insect, the *imago* as it is called, an apt symbol of the transformation that will be wrought in us on our passage from this world to the next. "Eternal life" is set before us in St John's Gospel, and more explicitly in his first Epistle, as a life which, so long as we are in the state of sanctifying grace, we already possess in germ; but it is a life of which the full exercise is for the present in abeyance, as the faculty of sight is in abeyance while we are in a perfectly dark room.* The full exercise of that life, in the next world, is the happiness of heaven.

But we may go further than this, and form some dim notion of that in which this happiness consists. We know that the essential bliss of heaven is, in the words of St Paul and St John, "to see God face to face," "to see Him as He is," "to know Him even as we are known."† All these expressions are, of course, in a certain sense metaphorical and analogous; for the vision of God is something immeasurably

* 1 John iii. 2; *cf.* St John xx. 31; vi. 58.
† 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 John iii. 2.

higher, better, more satisfying than the sight of the bodily eyes; and the manner of our knowledge of God as He is will be something very different from, and infinitely superior to, the laborious, imperfect, and more or less clumsy fashion in which we know persons and things in this life. Our knowledge of God will indeed be intuitive and immediate, like vision; but it will not, like bodily vision, stop as it were at the surface, but will be more penetrating than the most intimate knowledge of which we have any experience here on earth. Knowledge, as we have it here, consists, at least in part, in the formation of a kind of mental image of the thing or person known. But our knowledge of God will transform our very being and substance into the likeness of God, a likeness far closer than that which we already unconsciously possess, even in this life, through the gift of sanctifying grace. "Behold," says St John, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God. . . . Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is."* And difficult and obscure as these words may seem to us, the Apostle evidently thinks them at least sufficiently clear and explicit to afford a motive for hope. For he goes on in the very next verse:

* 1 John iii. 1, 2.

"And every one that hath this hope in him sanctifieth himself, as He also is holy." *

Again, we can form some faint and far-off idea (such as we are intended to have) of this essential reward of heaven, from what we know of human love, which is, beyond comparison, the most intense and — when rightly ordered — the highest and most perfect kind of natural joy and happiness attainable in this life. Love, as we know very well, feeds on the sight of the person loved; but it would be a gross and selfish kind of love if it stopped here. If it deserves the name of love, it seeks and cannot be satisfied without an intimate communication of thoughts and ideas, of wishes, of interests, and of sympathies. So much so, that it is one of the greatest disenchantments of life to find that the innermost being of every one—even of our most intimate friend, nay, even of wife or husband—is, after all, hidden behind an impenetrable barrier which neither party to the union can entirely remove. We cannot get at the really inmost thoughts even of the most intimate of friends, nor, indeed, could he reveal them to us if he would; and, moreover, even if he could and did thus entirely reveal himself to us, how far would this self-revelation be from satisfying the deepest needs of our heart? To say this is to cast no undeserved slur on human love, which, when rightly understood and rightly ordered and subordinated to God's holy will, is the very crown

* 1 John v. 3.

of His gifts to man in the natural order, and which is capable of being raised and elevated by grace to the heights of heroism. It is only a warning not to expect from human love what it cannot give; and, indeed, it is precisely by not expecting from it what it cannot give that we can best get from it that which it can give and is intended to give. To borrow a thought from St Augustine, he loves with the best and wisest and truest love, who loves wife, or parent, or friends in God, and who sees God in them; and who recognises the necessary imperfection of every created object, and of every created gift, since perfection is to be found only in the Creator.

And therefore it is that in all human friendship we do well—and men learn sooner or later—to bear with and to practise a certain reserve, and to acknowledge that behind the thoughts that are expressed lie other and deeper thoughts and feelings that can neither be uttered by ourselves nor reached in another. Nevertheless, the very sense of those limitations to the intercourse of soul with soul, and of heart with heart, which sometimes perhaps we may have vainly sought to overpass, or in which we have, as it may be hoped, more wisely learned to acquiesce—the very sense of these limitations testifies to the inextinguishable desire of the heart of man for complete and unreserved personal intercommunion. And it should serve at once as a sign-post and a stimulus, guiding and urging us to seek that intercommunion where alone

it can be found, viz., with God; and even with God Himself not fully and completely in this life, but only in the life to come. Each of us is as a king in the realm of his own conscience, and it is as endowed with sovereign powers—sovereign indeed by a delegated authority, but still sovereign by right of our free-will—that God treats with us. None but He can deal directly and immediately with the human conscience; none but He can satisfy the needs of the human heart, intangible at its root and centre to all but its Creator. And this satisfaction we shall find fully realised, and realised beyond all our powers of imagination, when we shall see God face to face, when we shall see Him as He is, and know Him even as we are known by Him.

In our intimate communion with God in heaven there will be no shadow of a secret, no possibility of a misunderstanding, those two drawbacks to the perfection of human intimacy. Even here of course we can have, in one sense, no secrets from God. For He is ever present in the very centre of our souls, witnessing our every thought, and supplying in advance the help that we need for the utterance of so much as a single word, or the performance of the slightest action. But although there is nothing in our lives that God does not see far more clearly than we see it ourselves, yet there may have been many things in our lives that we should have felt inclined to hide from God if we could, which would have made us

glad to forget His presence if we could. And besides these sinful or unworthy acts and words and thoughts, there are many things, even in our waking lives, of which we are only half-conscious, and which we do not and cannot explicitly lay before Him. But in heaven there will be no half-consciousness, still less will there be any wish to keep back anything from God; but our every act will be an outpouring of our hearts in loving adoration, a complete self-manifestation to Him whom we shall then see to be indeed our God and our all. And God on His side will have no secrets from us. Not, of course, that even in the intuitive vision of heaven we can ever have an adequate and comprehensive knowledge of God such as is His knowledge of His creatures; but He will manifest Himself to us without reserve, according to the utmost measure of our capacities and of our desires. And the measure of our capacities and of our desires, then, will be the measure of the grace or merit which we have acquired in this life. It would be a priceless gain if we could only acquire a deep conviction, such as that which St Augustine so often expresses in the wonderful book of his *Confessions*, that all created beauty is but a faint shadow of the uncreated beauty of God, and that all human love is but as a tiny spark from the great furnace of God's love for men; that all the intimacy we have ever enjoyed or could ever enjoy with the best and most lovable of mankind, is to the intimacy which we shall

enjoy with God, as the rough scrawl of a child to the most consummate masterpiece of the greatest artist the world has ever seen or can ever see.

Hitherto, we have considered only those truths about the happiness of heaven which it is most difficult to understand—just as the pain of loss is the most difficult to understand about hell. Some other considerations on the subject, which may, perhaps, appeal more directly to our imagination and our feelings, must for the present be deferred. Meanwhile, it is worth our while to rouse ourselves to the hope and desire of that blessed state in which we shall see God face to face; in which we shall see Him as He is, and know Him even as we are known by Him. This is the joy of our Lord to which the faithful servant will be bidden.

X.

HEAVEN (2)*

"Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—ST MATT. xxv. 21.

WE have tried to form some notion in our minds of the essential element in the happiness of heaven, which consists in what is called the "Beatific Vision," a face-to-face intercourse with God. But we have also fully recognised that, although this is a truth and a conviction that in a manner satisfies the understanding, it is a truth which cannot be represented in or by the imagination, and which is therefore apt to leave our feelings and emotions somewhat untouched. It is well, then, in our meditations on heaven, to take account of some of the more human elements in that inadequate and fragmentary idea of the joys of life everlasting, which is all that we can compass here below. In this present life we see but "as through a glass

* Recast and expanded from short Meditations.

darkly";* and we know that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."† It is designedly so, nay, as we have already seen, it is necessarily so. We can no more imagine spiritual realities than we can taste a sound or hear a landscape. It is part of the trial of our faith to trust God for our reward. At the same time, we must not neglect what Holy Scripture tells us, in figurative language, about the joys of heaven; and, in particular, there are some expressions occurring in the Gospel parables which may help us to lift up our hearts and to form some kind of analogous concept of what is in store for us, if we be found faithful at the last.

1. And, in the first place, it is to be observed that the joys of heaven will come to each one of us as a personal gift from our blessed Lord Himself, a gift from the abundance of His Sacred Heart, bestowed on each of His faithful servants individually by His own "sacred and venerable hands." At the close of that parable of the watchful servants, which so forcibly conveys the lesson that life is, or should be, a preparation for death, we read these words: "Blessed are those servants, whom, when the Lord cometh, He shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, He will gird Himself, and will make them sit down to meat,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. † 1 Cor. ii. 9.

and passing, will minister to them."* A very touching picture, and one which, though not unimaginable, transcends all ordinary human experience; for it is not so that human masters commonly treat their servants. But our Lord's generosity is not trammelled by the conventions of human society. "Amen, I say to you, He will gird Himself." We are reminded of that solemn occasion when the Son of Man did indeed "gird Himself with a towel," and —after the manner of a menial servant—"washed the feet of His disciples";† and we are further reminded that that was no isolated instance, but in very deed a foreshadowing of what will one day happen in heaven. The faithful servant has spent his life girt for the service of his Lord. And when the gates of the royal palace are thrown open, and he is bidden to enter in, his Lord in His turn will gird Himself to the service of His own minister. His work on our behalf was only begun, not finished, here on earth; and in heaven He will meet us, His Divine nature still girt about, so to say, with the servant's garb of His sacred Humanity; He will receive us as man receiving men; and He will bid us "sit down to meat, and, passing, will minister" to us. The picture is that of a servant who passes from guest to guest, and sets before each his allotted portion. But we know well that it is not by distribution of parts that He will reward us; but that as in the Holy Communion

* St Luke xii. 37. † St John xiii. 4, 5.

each of us receives Him whole and entire, in heaven too the law will hold good that: *Sic totum omnibus quod totum singulis*—"So giveth He all to all, that He giveth all to each." And that which He will give is Himself. In this connection, a very beautiful passage may be quoted from one of Bishop Hedley's discourses:—

"If love was wonderful in Creation," he says, "it is still more wonderful in Reparation," that is to say, in the whole economy of the Redemption. "It is the work of a Person on behalf of persons—of Jesus on behalf of you and of me! . . . The infinite boon of eternal life, He does not fling to us as if He condescended to us; but He seems to step from His throne and to come to the door of the heavens, and to lead us with imperial hand as honoured guests through His courts and His chambers until He places us in the hall of Presence, near the footstool of His eternal throne. The saving of souls is a work He does with His own hands. It is not [merely] a ministry that He directs—not a message that He sends—not an alms that He throws to us; it is a rite, a ceremony, a grand and solemn pageant in which He Himself is the chief and foremost figure. It is a princely negotiation which He concludes with treasure coined in the treasury of His own Sacred Heart. . . . The Heavenly Father does not send out a servant to greet the returning prodigal. Ah! He has looked and longed for him Himself, and

when He catches sight of the poor, broken creature on the road afar off, He hastens down to meet him, and not before He has fallen on his neck and kissed him does He put the vesture of grace upon him or kill the fatted calf. *Dilexit et lavit.* It was the love of the Sacred Heart which wrought the Redemption." * And, if all this be true of the economy of grace, we may be very sure that in the fulfilment of that economy in heaven the same characteristic features of God's dealings with man will be exhibited in an incalculably higher mode of realisation than any which we can conceive. *Cor ad cor loquetur*, then as now, but with an inconceivably closer intimacy.

2. The second point to be noticed is this. The reward of heaven will be a sharing in our Lord's own reward. The words that are said to the faithful servant are these: "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." In proportion as a man has shared in the Master's labours, and—either by endurance of pain or by voluntary penance and self-denial—in the Master's sufferings, in that proportion (allowing, of course, for differences in purity of intention and motive), will he share in the Master's joy. It is a joy which He, as Man, has won and merited, even though it was His by right divine, apart from any course of meritorious action. In this, too, as in all other things—sin only excepted—"it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become

* Hedley, *Our Divine Saviour*, pp. 60, 61.

a merciful and faithful High Priest before God." * He would give us of His very own, of that which, though it belonged to Him by virtue of the hypostatic union, He would win, even as we must win it, by labour and suffering.

3. And now we may ask ourselves, in the third place, what is this joy of our Lord which we shall be invited to share? It is His joy at the salvation of mankind. "Rejoice *with Me*," says the Good Shepherd, "because I have found My sheep that was lost." † And again we read: "There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner that doth penance." ‡ Note that it is not merely said: "There shall be joy *among* the angels," but there shall be joy "*before*" them, in their presence; and that joy is the joy of the Sacred Heart of our Lord, in which they will be invited to share. And to a share in that joy we too shall be bidden; and thus the joy of each will be the joy of all, and the joy of all will be the joy of each. All these myriad millions of rays of happiness will meet in the Sacred Heart of Jesus as in their focus, and will thence stream forth again, reflected, as it were, from it to every human heart in that vast assembly; and thus shall we be united in the Communion of Saints, each rejoicing in the other's joy, and all rejoicing in our dearest Lord.

* Heb. ii. 17. † St Luke xv. 6.

‡ St Luke xv. 10; χαρὰ γίνεται ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων, κ.τ.λ.

We may feed our devotion by thinking of the special and particular joys that shall be ours in that eternal ocean of bliss everlasting. A joy most special of all, and quite unique, in the transcendent glory of Mary, our Queen and our Mother. A special joy in the glory of our patron Saint, or of those to whom we have been devout during life, and with whom we shall find that we have established an everlasting bond of love and friendship. A special joy in the glory of those whom we have known and loved here on earth, in whose memory we shall find that every act of love and kindness is treasured up, and all offences and misunderstandings blotted out and forgotten. A most particular joy in the glory of those whom we have helped to gain eternal salvation; of the poor, whether known to us or quite unknown, whose necessities our alms have relieved, or (in the case of the former) whose hard lots our sympathy has soothed; of men and women and children from distant lands to which we have helped to send the glad tidings of the Gospel; of those whose purgatorial pains our suffrages have shortened. A special joy for the highest and the holiest; but a special joy, too, for those who have been barely saved, almost in spite of themselves, by some miracle of grace. A special joy for the nearest and dearest; but a special joy, also, for those whose names we had never heard, and in whom we now find new friends and companions innumerable; joy for that "great multitude,

which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues," who "stand before the throne and in the sight of the Lamb." * And a special joy, again, for those whom, perhaps, during our lives, we had regarded with dislike and aversion, but whom we now find purged of all that could displease us, and perhaps raised far above us for virtues which we were too dull-eyed to perceive, and for struggles and victories of which we knew nothing.

Aye, struggles and victories: for we must never forget that the host of heaven, which we hope one day to join, is a victorious army; and that if we would join them we must play our own part manfully in the strife. *Qui vicerit possidebit hæc*—"He that overcometh shall possess these things."

Qui vicerit—"He that overcometh." The phrase occurs again and again in the Apocalypse, and it occurs for the last time at the close of that description of the New Jerusalem with which we may conclude our meditation. "And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men. And He will dwell with them; and they shall be His people; and God Himself with them shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more,

* Apoc. vii. 9.

nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more; for the former things are passed away. And He that sat on the throne said: Behold, I make all things new. . . . He that shall overcome shall possess these things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." *

* Apoc. xxi. 2-7.

XI.

SELF-CONQUEST *

Vincenti dabo manna absconditum, et nomen novum—"To him that overcometh I will give a hidden manna, and a new name."—APOC. ii. 17.

IN almost any work of practical religious instruction that we may happen to read, from the inspired pages of the New Testament downwards, we are almost sure to find that something is said on the subject of self-denial, self-control, self-conquest, detachment, and so forth. Now, these are words which, on a first hearing, and often long after a first hearing, have a rather disagreeable sound. The subject to which they have reference is apt to strike us as decidedly irksome. Indeed, it may possibly be so irksome as to suggest an objection, or rather a foolish cavil, which might serve as an excuse for not learning, and laying to heart, and putting into practice a lesson which is, after all, as salutary as it is unwelcome. It may be said: But how can I

* Sunday, November 15, 1903.

deny myself? Am I not myself? And how can I deny *me?* How can the same person be the subject and the object of the same act? It seems to be almost against the laws of grammar, to say nothing of logic. To deny myself seems to be one of those impossible things which it is a kind of practical nonsense to attempt; like trying to jump over one's shadow. Then, again, does not Polonius say, in *Hamlet:*

> To thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.

How, then, is it possible, and if possible, how can it be right, to deny myself?

Perhaps it may have seemed hardly worth while to spend time in raising such a frivolous difficulty; to which we all of us know the answer so well. But there is just this much of excuse for having stated it explicitly, viz., that to have done so affords an occasion for repeating the solution, which, though familiar enough, is yet one which we do well to impress upon ourselves again and again from time to time. And the solution is this. Our "self" is a very complex sort of being, made up, so to say, of a great many different experiences, thoughts, fancies, inclinations, desires, and so forth. Now it is manifestly impossible, and if possible, could not possibly be right, to deny our *whole* selves. But

the inclinations which we find within ourselves, or which we sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly or unwisely foster in ourselves, do not all tend in the same direction. On the contrary, they are very much at war with one another. The inclination to play, or to idle, or to lounge, often opposes very strongly the higher and better inclination to study or to engage in some healthful active exercise. And the inclination to indulge our lower and baser passions fights against our higher and better inclination to observe God's law, and to keep ourselves pure and unspotted in His sight. It is the old story, told nearly nineteen hundred years ago by St Paul, when he wrote: "I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I take delight in the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind. . . . Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death. The grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord." *

Self-denial, then, does not mean the denial of our *whole* selves, but it means saying "no" to our lower self, *i.e.*, to our lower inclinations, in order that we may pursue some more worthy end than that to which they would lead us. That is the plain common-sense of the matter, as we knew very well all the time that we were putting to

* Rom. vii. 22-24.

ourselves, and answering for ourselves, that futile objection about the impossibility of self-denial.

But again, it may be said that habitual self-denial, though obviously possible and evidently right, must surely be a very galling process, and that the business of self-conquest is one that, if carried out in earnest, must take all the pleasant taste out of life. If we are to engage in a life-long enterprise of self-conquest, this assuredly seems a rather dismal prospect, especially for a young man of more or less distinguished family, and with more or less brilliant expectations. What is the use, it may be asked, of a big income and a fine estate, if we are not to enjoy ourselves, and if we are to devote ourselves to the task of self-conquest instead? This is a rather less futile objection than the other one, and it deserves a more careful answer. First of all, then, let us remember that there is not a sensible man living who does not overcome many of his natural inclinations. This is plain enough in the case of professional men, and of men in business. For in every profession, and in every line of business, from that of the crossing-sweeper to that of the merchant prince, a good deal of more or less unpleasant work is the condition of success; and work, even under the most favourable conditions, must always involve the overcoming of many opposing inclinations. And even the gentleman who has no need to work for his livelihood or for

the support of his family, but lives on his means, must needs deny himself a carriage and pair if he can only afford a modest gig; and if he has no more than a thousand a year, he must forego the pleasure of building himself a palace, or of renting a deer-forest and of entertaining royal dukes. Even the man with five millions must deny himself the pleasure of spending six, if he does not wish to end his days in the workhouse; and he must exercise sufficient self-control to observe the laws of his country, if he does not wish to be taken in charge by the police.

Self-denial, then, and self-control, must be exercised by every one in whatsoever condition of life, and the difference is simply one of degree and motive. Now, in recommending to us the practice of self-denial and self-control, ascetical writers have in view, of course, a much higher degree of this exercise than is practised by the average man of the world; and they recommend it for a motive quite different from that by which such men are commonly influenced. But the point is this, that if a good deal of self-denial is found to be worth while for the sake of getting on in the world, then certainly a great deal more is worth while for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, or, let us say, for the sake of doing God's will more perfectly. Moreover, as the self-denial which men practise for the sake of temporal advantages is found to be no such dreadful matter, so that people come to deny them-

selves, somewhat as M. Jourdain talked prose, without being aware of it; in like manner, Christian self-denial, which is undertaken for the sake of pleasing God, will be found to be no intolerable task or burden. It only needs a good and courageous will, and some perseverance, in order to form a settled habit of disregarding our lower inclinations.

But there is much more than this to be said. Not only does a certain degree of self-denial become comparatively easy with practice, but it may be safely affirmed that there are no happier men on earth than those who most bravely, and generously, and perseveringly deny and conquer themselves for the sake of serving God as perfectly as possible. Which of the two shall we suppose was most happy; Paul Kostka, devoted to the pleasures, the dissipations, the frivolities of the world, or his brother Stanislas who would have nothing to say to these things, who often spent a great part of the night in prayer, whose austerities were as rigorous as might have befitted a great sinner, and who made a long journey of some fifteen hundred miles on foot, part of it in the garb of a beggar, in order that he might devote himself to the service of God in a religious order? Paul spent his later years in deploring the excesses of his youth, and in particular his cruel persecution of his young and holy brother; Stanislas was noted among all who knew him from his earliest childhood for his bright and happy disposition. And

it is always so. God will not be outdone in generosity; and those who deny themselves and conquer themselves for His sake, He rewards with a peace and tranquillity of mind, and with a holy joy, which incomparably surpasses all the pleasures that the world has to give. Stanislas had not to wait for his early passage to heaven for his recompense. The hundredfold is definitely promised for this present life. And it is probably of this present life that those words of the Apocalypse are to be understood: *Vincenti dabo manna absconditum*—"To him that overcometh I will give a hidden manna"; that is to say, a hidden food which contains in itself all manner of sweetness.

Now it is plain that we are not called by God to exercise self-denial in the same degree, or in the same way, as it was exercised by St Stanislas. But we are all called on to undertake just that amount of self-denial which is involved in making God's holy will our rule of life and conduct. We are all invited to make it a ruling principle of our lives to ask ourselves, whenever any two courses of action are open to us, which of them will please God best? Shall I please God best by grumbling, or by holding my tongue and bearing some little grievance patiently? Shall I please God best by being troublesome and noisy in the school-room, or by keeping silence? Shall I please God best by calling my neighbour names, using vulgar words, doing unkind acts, and

so on, or will He be better pleased if I refrain from these things? These are questions to which there is no need to reply in set terms. But it must be plain to all of us that the answer which our common-sense suggests is one that, when reduced to action, involves a good deal of self-denial and self-conquest. And do we imagine that we shall be any the less happy for exercising this self-control? If we have any doubt on the subject, the best plan is to try it and see. "To him that overcometh I will give a hidden manna," that is to say, a kind of spiritual food which is hidden from, or unknown to, those who live self-indulgent lives. Our Lord Himself speaks of this food, when He said: "I have a food to eat that you know not of. . . . My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me."* We must not, of course, press a metaphor too closely; but in substance the truth here expressed amounts to this, that from the close union of our will with that of God we derive a sense of support, and of strength, and of satisfaction, comparable with that sense of support, and of strength, and of satisfaction which is given by bodily food. Try it and see. "Taste and see how sweet the Lord is." All of us have in our better moments experienced something of this sweetness and of this sense of strength. We shall taste it the more fully and more constantly, the more steadily and constantly we bend our wills into conformity with the divine

* St John iv. 32, 34.

will. By degrees we shall come to feel, as a prime factor in our lives, an unshaken confidence that nothing can hurt or harm us while we are striving to carry out God's will; an ever-deepening conviction that anything and everything which is not in accordance with God's will is a mischief to be shunned or a trifle to be despised. And for these mischievous and trifling things we may by degrees acquire a positive distaste; and we may learn to find a corresponding relish and satisfaction in doing God's will in all things at whatever cost. "To him that overcometh I will give a hidden manna." "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me, the Father."*

* The Feast of St Stanislas Kostka, in the Calendar of the Society of Jesus, falls on November 13. Hence the references to him in this discourse. (November 15.)

XII.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST*

"What went ye out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of Kings."—ST MATT. xi. 7-8.

THE spiritual life, as we may perhaps have had occasion to observe, is full of apparent contradictions. Our Lord's birth was heralded by angels who sang of peace to men; "Peace be to you," was the salutation with which our Lord Himself, on more than one solemn occasion, greeted His disciples; yet in another place He tells us that He came "to bring, not peace, but a sword." On the one hand He bids us to be as little children in docility; and yet elsewhere we are exhorted to quit ourselves manfully: *Viriliter age . . . et sustine Dominum.*† We are to be meek, yet bold; we are to mourn, yet always to rejoice; we are bidden to serve our Father who seeth in secret, not parading our good works—and

* December 6, 1903 (Second Sunday in Advent).

† Ps. xxvi. 14.

yet we are no less plainly told that by our good example we are to be as a bright light, shining before men. Of course we know very well that these apparent contradictions all have their explanation, and that they arise from looking at the same truth from different points of view; but it is useful to pay attention to them, lest we should be betrayed into the mistake of taking too one-sided a view even of the most sacred truths. But besides these apparent contradictions in the precepts and counsels of the Christian life, there are also certain very remarkable contrasts which present themselves in the actual history of the Gospel dispensation. The Baptist, of whom we read in to-day's Gospel, retires into the wilderness, far from the haunts of men; and he finds himself the centre of a crowd of eager listeners. St Benedict, in a later age, withdraws to a mountain fastness for the sake of solitude; yet he becomes the founder not merely of a religious order but of a new civilisation. Francis of Assisi strips himself of his very clothes, and goes forth from the bishop's court as a penniless beggar; yet his mission was to regenerate society. Our Blessed Lord Himself died in torment and ignominy, His work in appearance an utter failure; and yet it was by this apparent failure that He secured His triumph over the powers of darkness. Truly, God's thoughts are not as the thoughts of men; and His ways are very different.

The Baptist, as has been said, went out into the

wilderness, and drew thither a crowd from Jerusalem, and from the towns and villages of Judæa. His purpose, or rather, let us say, God's purpose in thus drawing them forth, was that they might make a kind of spiritual retreat under skilful guidance; far from the scenes, the employments, the cares, the distractions, of their daily lives. Many went out; and alas! many returned not much the better for their visit to the great preacher, the forerunner of the Messiah, the herald of the Gospel. They had stood agape, it may be, at his rugged and untutored but earnest eloquence; they had exchanged platitudes about his extraordinary influence; they had admired or they had criticised his uncompromising utterances; they had done anything and everything except that one thing which he had exhorted them to do, that one thing which was the burden of all his preaching: *Pœnitentiam agite, appropinquavit enim regnum cœlorum*—"Do penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

And some of them who had thus heard the Baptist, with little profit to themselves, must surely have been among the crowd to whom our Lord addressed that question which we have already heard: *Quid existis in desertum videre?*—"What went ye out into the desert to see?" If they had not benefited as they ought to have done by the exhortations and instructions of St John, our Lord would at least give them the opportunity of drawing profit from their remembrance of what they had seen and heard. "What went ye

out . . . to see?" As though He had said: "What manner of man was he to whom ye listened? For the example of his life may be to you a more powerful sermon than his words."

"What went ye out . . . to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" The allusion is to the beds of reeds, waving in the wind and bending under every current of air, that fringed the banks of the Jordan where John had baptised: a fit symbol of those men of weak and unformed character, who allow themselves to be swayed hither and thither by the illusions of the devil, the allurements of the world, the incitements of the flesh, — by gusts of passion, by insidious eddies of temptation, by the light and fickle breezes of public opinion. Forgetful of the power that is theirs by virtue of their free will, and of the grace of God which is ever ready at their need, such men are ever slaves to the fashion of the hour, they fall a ready prey to the impulse of the moment, and may well be likened to reeds shaken by the wind. Was it such a one whom the people had gone out into the wilderness to see? There is no need to go far afield to seek such as these. They may be found in any drawing-room, if only the company is sufficiently numerous; and in every place of public resort. Not such as these was the Baptist, but a man of unbending integrity; a man who regulated his life by fixed principles of conduct; a man the source of whose moral strength lay in the close union and entire

subordination of his will to the will of God; a man utterly fearless, whether in the midst of hostile Pharisees or in the court of Herod; fearless, not out of bravado, not from a mere stirring of the blood, or a forgetfulness of consequences in the heat of passion, or (as sometimes happens) because he had a greater fear of the reproach of cowardice; but simply because he knew that while he had God on his side, while he was delivering a message which he was commissioned by God to deliver, no real harm could befall him; and that imprisonment and death were only the appointed means whereby he was to be more surely brought to the supreme end and goal of human life, the fruition of God in heaven. Not a waving reed, feeble and fickle, but a sturdy oak, unmoved by the blast, were a fitting symbol of the Baptist.

And again our Lord goes on to ask: "What went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are in soft garments are in the houses of kings." We know how far the Baptist was from the description of a man clothed in soft garments. His raiment, as the Gospel tells us, was a rough robe of camel's hair girt about his loins; and his food was of the poorest, such as the wilderness could supply. And this, strange as it may seem, was part of the very secret of his attraction. For so, indeed, it has ever been. Self-denial—heroic self-denial in some shape or form—has ever been the indispensable passport to the highest esteem in

which man holds his fellow-man. We may envy the millionaire, we may admire the genius of the successful general, of the man of science, of the poet, the orator, the historian; but that which commands our respect is industry, patience, perseverance, fortitude; or again, benevolence of the kind that costs, of the kind that involves serious and sustained effort. And that which alone claims our reverence, as distinct from mere admiration and respect, is self-denying virtue consecrated to the service of God. All the saints have been, in one way or other, men of austere lives; and a life like that of the Baptist, the life of one who spends himself and is spent in the service of his Creator, has always had a strange fascination even for the self-indulgent, the frivolous, the worldly-minded.

Now the mission of the Baptist was "to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people"; and that is our mission too, according to the measure of our gifts and our opportunities, whether as priests or as laymen. It is ours to act as the leaven that is to purify the society in which our lot may be cast. We shall fulfil this mission if, like the Baptist, we are men of good will; if we are men who have learned to will straight and strongly; if we are men who have learned to deny and to despise our lower selves, our sinful and foolish selves, that we may the more thoroughly devote our better selves to the service of God in the state of life to which we may be called, or which we may reasonably choose.

XIII.

SPIRITUAL JOY*

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. . . . Be nothing solicitous, but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God."—PHILIP. iv. 4, 6.

THESE words, it would seem, must be understood as addressed, primarily, to Christians who are living in the state of sanctifying grace, and in the faithful observance of God's law; for assuredly they cannot in their full sense be appropriated by one who should be in the deadly condition of grievous sin. Who is there that would venture to say to such a one, without qualification: "Rejoice"? Rather, he would have to say: "Repent, that you may rejoice"; "Sow in tears, that you may reap in gladness." He would have to say to him: Do not lull yourself in a false security; do not take upon your tongue or harbour in your thoughts the foolish boast of that foolish man in the Apocalypse: "Behold I am rich,

* December 13, 1903 (Third Sunday in Advent).

and am grown wealthy, and I want for nothing." Or, to translate the words into the language of boyhood: "I hold a good place in my class, I am good at the games, I sing in the choir or I play in the orchestra, and I have something of a talent for acting, or for gymnastics; I am very popular with my companions;—what more do I want?" What more does he want? If (which God forbid) he is in the state of sin, he wants the one thing necessary: he wants the grace of God. If (which God forbid) he is in the state of sin, then — to use the words of the same passage from the Apocalypse — he is in God's eyes, "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked." Yes, a pauper in God's sight, and with a terrible doom hanging over him if he does not repent. And shall such a one be bidden to rejoice? Nay, he must first, with God's grace, break his bonds; he must first put away the occasions of sin. If the temptation comes to him from within, he must pray with all his heart for the grace to overcome it; if it should be a companion who leads him into danger, or worse than danger, that companion is no friend to him, but an enemy to be shunned and avoided, in the true interests of both.

But those who are living habitually in God's holy grace, and who are prompt to repent, by a fervent act of contrition, if ever they should have the misfortune to fall into grievous sin, may profitably and fitly take to themselves those words of the Apostle:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice. . . . With thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God."

"Rejoice!" Our own experience and good sense will tell us that cheerfulness, even apart from any special motive on which it may rest, is a most desirable and even valuable disposition; valuable in the same way as bodily exercise and mental activity are valuable; valuable because, when a boy or a man is cheerful and active, he is far less likely to be assaulted by temptations of various kinds than when he is either gloomy or idle.

Yet it is plain that when St Paul bids us to "rejoice in the Lord always," he has something more in his mind than the cultivation of a naturally cheerful disposition; something which includes this, but which also goes beyond it; something which is better and higher than merely constitutional cheerfulness. He is speaking of spiritual joy; of a joy which is based on a specifically spiritual and supernatural motive. And it may be worth our while to consider with some care and attention the conditions which are requisite to entitle and enable us to "rejoice always" with this spiritual joy.

The matter turns in great measure on the nature or character of our ideals of life, on what we are—in homely phrase—"trying for." Let us consider three such ideals, all of them in their several ways unsatisfactory or at least inadequate; and then we will put

beside them a fourth ideal which alone will secure for us that perennial fountain of peace and happiness by virtue of which we may "rejoice in the Lord always."

There is, first of all, the ideal of those who regard life as a pastime, an ideal such as we may perchance have heard expressed in words like these: "The great art is to reduce life to a succession of pleasant sensations, with as much variety as possible to break the monotony." This is the ideal of the boy who regards his existence as made up of a series of "good times," separated by unpleasant intervals of work, which he considers in the light of a regrettable but unavoidable nuisance.

This first ideal is plainly not worthy of a man, or even of a boy, and it certainly will not enable us to "rejoice in the Lord always." It is, moreover, a self-deluding and self-defeating ideal. The man, or the boy, who lives for pleasure will have to spend most of his time waiting for it or working for it; and when it comes it will (especially in later years) be full of disappointments. And the more so because a life which has the pursuit of pleasure for its principal aim is sure sooner or later to become a life of sin; and sin has its punishment in this world, as well as its doom in the next. "Work for pleasure's sake" is, then, not to be our ideal.

Then there is what may be called the professional view of life. A boy says: "I am not so foolish as

to suppose that life can be all jam; nor so babyish as to be always looking forward to such brief periods of enjoyment as may fall to my lot, or looking back upon them; I have more serious views than that; I mean to work in earnest at my calling in life; I intend to distinguish myself as an officer in the army or navy, as a lawyer or a physician, or to succeed in business; and in any case I hope to leave an honoured name behind me." This may be called the ideal of "work for work's sake."

And then, again, there is the philanthropic ideal; that of the boy who says: "Neither of these two theories of life comes up to my standard, for both of them seem rather selfish. I intend to be good to the poor, kind to my servants, faithful to my friends, a comfort to my parents in their old age; and, of course, I will do my best for my children in their turn, as my father has done for me. And this is the sum total of my practical philosophy." This may be called the ideal of "work for man's sake."

Now the professional and the philanthropic ideals of life, the ideal of work for work's sake, and the ideal of work for man's sake, are both good in their way, and the latter is better than the former. Yet neither of them is quite satisfactory, as stated. For in each of them an all-important element is omitted. It is not merely that professional work is apt to become, in course of time, monotonous and tiresome; not merely that we cannot all expect success; not

merely that our benevolent designs on behalf of others are sure to issue in many disappointments: but any ideal of life which does not lead us to look beyond this world of shadows, or, in other words, which does not take account of God and of our duties to Him, is of necessity unsatisfying, except so far as we cheat ourselves into contentment with it, by refusing or neglecting to face the truth.

Let us help ourselves by means of one or two comparisons. A piece of mechanism of which the wheels and the works should do nothing but rotate and oscillate like the model machines at South Kensington, without turning out any product as the result of all these movements, would be no better than a kind of expensive toy. And a company of the sort which, while it provides employment and salaries for its directors, produces no dividends for the shareholders, is esteemed a fraud. Now the life of man upon earth is like such a piece of machinery, it resembles the affairs of such a bogus company—unless it produces something outside of itself; unless it has some dividends to show on the great day of reckoning.

There is no escaping the truth that the only sensible way of looking at this present life is to regard it as a preparation for the next. Then at once it becomes full of meaning; and earnestness—that earnestness which we all so much need—becomes rational. For we have to steer midway between

two extremes: that of treating this life as all-important for its own sake, and that of treating it—or imagining that we ought to force ourselves to treat it—as of no account at all. This last would be a false and foolish kind of asceticism, like that of many fanatics outside the Church; like that of many heretics who, in successive ages, have separated themselves from the Church. We are neither to overestimate the incidents of life and the good things of the world, nor to despise them. Play is good, innocent pleasure is good in its place and degree, because they help us to work; work is good and important because it is God's will for us; all manner of beneficence to others and consideration for them is good because it is likewise God's will for us, and, moreover, because it helps them to do God's will, and (ultimately) to save their souls. And so, for the unsatisfactory or inadequate ideals of "work for pleasure's sake," "work for work's sake," and "work for man's sake," we substitute the true ideal of "work for God's sake." And this is the secret of true peace and joy.

To take another illustration. We may regard the circumstances of life, and the objects that surround us, as being like the frame with its canvas on which the embroiderer works his pattern. The pattern cannot be worked without the frame: but the frame is for the pattern, not the pattern for the frame. And the pattern which we work is formed entirely

by acts of the will. Each act of the will rightly directed is a stitch to the good; each misdirected act of the will is either what they call a "dropped stitch," or else a faulty stitch that will have to be picked out some day. It is the will which counts. We use threads of various colours according to the conditions under which we live, some bright, some of neutral tint, some darker in hue. These we find to our hand, and we are, of course, never responsible for what we cannot help. It is the use we make of them that will avail in God's eyes. It is the stitches, the pattern which we have worked, by which we shall be judged. Here we see only a little bit of the reverse of the pattern. In the next life we shall be surprised to behold what our will has wrought. It is the will that counts.

And precisely because it is the will that counts, we have it in our power, with God's grace, to "rejoice in the Lord always," and "always and everywhere to give thanks"—*semper et ubique gratias agere;* as the Church sings, even in her Masses for the dead. For we are always and everywhere master of our own will, and the art of always rejoicing is to keep our will always in conformity with the will of God; always in subjection to that supreme rule of action and endurance. Out of this conformity and subjection—which is the perfection of "effective" love—will grow, sooner or later, "affective" love; that humble and reverential yet tender and familiar love

of God which can be experienced, but cannot be described; and which unites in itself all the best qualities of the love of a son for his father, of a friend for his friend, of the bride for the bridegroom. This affective love of God is of slow growth; but long before it is attained in any high degree, we may learn to rejoice always; to rejoice in that calm sense of security, that deep peace, which comes of the conviction that while God is with us we have all that we really need; that, while we are working for Him and with Him, success or failure, fair weather or foul, cannot alter His approval of our efforts, cannot change His love for us; which is all that we desire.

In this sense of active and passive conformity with the divine will lies a man's true strength; herein is the source of true joy, of true peace; herein is the true key to the riddle of life.

But when it is said that submission to God's will provides a key to the riddle of life, this does not mean that it can solve for us here and now all the mysteries of the universe, or even any one of them. We may often have occasion to call to mind our Lord's words to St Peter: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."* Confidence in God brings the conviction that, however puzzling the problems of life may seem to us, there is an explanation of them, and that the explanation is

* St John xiii. 7.

known to God, who will reveal it to us in His own good time. It is as though a private soldier, or an engineer in the engine-room of a battleship, not understanding the nature of the manœuvres in which he is co-operating, should yet have such an absolute trust in his general or his admiral, as to be certain beyond the possibility of doubt that his every movement was directed not only to some worthy end, but also to a successful issue. This absolute trust can never be well grounded in the case of a fallible mortal leader. But God makes no mistakes, and in Him our confidence should be unbounded. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Do not wait for happiness. Do not be content to say: I will endeavour to attain to it hereafter. No, it is within our reach—within the reach of the youngest among us — here and now. It is for us to make it our own, and so to "rejoice in the Lord always."

XIV.

TILL CHRIST BE FORMED IN US*

In the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, v. 19, St Paul makes use of these words: "My little children, with whom I am in labour again, till Christ be formed in you." And inasmuch as in the spiritual life we are all exhorted to become as little children, and as these very words were originally addressed to grown men and women, we need not resent or deem incongruous their application to ourselves. The Apostle, indeed, speaks to his Galatian converts as though they were not merely little children, but infants yet unborn, waiting to be brought to the birth. And this comparison is in full accordance with the whole teaching of the Church concerning the present life in relation to the next. Baptism is indeed the sacrament of regeneration, by virtue of which we enter upon a new and supernatural life, the life of grace; but for our new birth, in its fuller sense,

* Sunday, December 20, 1903 (fourth of Advent).

we must wait for the day of our departure from this temporal life, and for that of our release from Purgatory. Hence the day of a saint's martyrdom is called, in the language of the Church, *dies natalis*, his "birthday"; for it is the day of his entrance into that true life for which our present state of existence is a tedious preparation. In this world we are, as has been said, in a sort of chrysalis state, or—to paraphrase St Paul's own comparison—conceived in the dark womb of time that we may be born into the spacious daylight of eternity.

Meanwhile, that is to say while we are waiting for this perfect birth, the whole process of the Christian life is or ought to be a gradual self-formation, under the influence of divine grace, to the likeness of the perfect Man, Christ Jesus our Lord. This process may, of course, be arrested or interrupted, for shorter or longer periods, during which a man is living in the state of mortal sin; and there may be times when, even though we be not in grievous sin, it goes forward very slowly. Our spiritual development may be, and too often is, checked by the parasitic growth of daily faults and of undesirable habits; the accretions of which, like some morbid growth in the living body, will have to be painfully purged, or cut, or cauterised away, either in this world or in the next. But so long as we are in the state of sanctifying grace the process of formation to the likeness of Christ is always going on, invisibly and imperceptibly, within

us; as the joint result of the divine assistance and of the acts of our own free will.

And the one ruling desire of all those who in this College are responsible for our education, is that the formation of Christ in us (to use the language of the Apostle) may proceed steadily and surely. They rejoice when any of us secure academic distinctions; they are pleased when we achieve success in the cricket-field or the football field, or when we are complimented for our military drill and manœuvres by some distinguished officer, and the like. For all these things help to encourage us; they all make for cheerfulness; and encouragement and cheerfulness are most efficacious and important aids to moral and religious goodness. But the one wish which predominates among all the authorities of this or any other Catholic school, nay, the main purpose for which Catholic schools as such exist and are maintained, is that Christ may be formed in the young, that each of us may be formed—self-formed with some little help and guidance from others—to the Christ-likeness, the Christ-like character.

Hitherto we have been principally engaged in trying to learn what may be called the "first concord" in the spiritual life, viz., the conformity or agreement of the human will with the divine will. And now this Christmas season introduces us to what may be described as the second concord; that of which St Paul speaks when he says that God

"predestined us to be made conformable to the image of His Son." It is this second concord, the study of which will form, so to say, our second term's work; and we may begin this study by way of a holiday task.

For it is just at this present season that the idea of Christ-likeness, of the Christ-like character, is most forcibly brought before us by the festival of our Lord's Nativity and the commemoration of the mysteries of His sacred Infancy. The very purpose of His coming, under one of its many aspects, may be expressed by saying that He became like to us that we might become like to Him.

Now it is unfortunately the case that, in the world outside, Christmastide is sometimes made the occasion of much sinful self-indulgence. And although we are not yet exposed to the grosser temptations of the world, there is a danger lest even for us the Christmas holidays might become a time of harmful dissipation, rather than of helpful devotion. Indeed it is matter of common observation that, even among Catholics, the salutary influence on ordinary life of the great festivals and sacred seasons of the ecclesiastical year tends to wane, and sometimes even threatens to vanish altogether. A most undesirable tendency, and one against which we shall do well to be on our guard. Not, of course, that our holidays ought to be other than happy and pleasant. But our good sense, our religious common-sense, will tell us, and

our own experience may have confirmed the lesson, that we shall not find any genuine happiness, even during vacation time, in forgetfulness of God ; or in such self-indulgence as may be inordinate or ill-regulated, if not positively sinful.

It will, then, be very much to the purpose to form our plans, here and now, for these coming weeks. And we can make no better offering to our Lord in our thanksgiving after Holy Communion on the last Sunday before the holidays, than the offering of such resolutions as we may have made, or may then and there make, with a view to keeping ourselves closer to Him during this time of many amusements and many distractions.

1. And, in the first place, our resolutions should have reference to the reception of the sacraments. It would be a poor fashion of hailing the birth of our Infant King to decline the best gifts which He brings with Him For those of us who are weekly communicants, the three great festivals of Christmas Day, New Year's Day or the Circumcision, and the Epiphany, plainly afford suitable occasions, at suitable intervals, for the maintenance of our accustomed practice. For those whose rule is fortnightly Communion, the first and the last of these feasts suggest themselves as the most appropriate days on which to receive our Lord. And even those who are accustomed to communicate only once a month will hardly wish to pass over Christmas Day, however

recent their last previous Communion may have been. And if it should happen that domestic arrangements interfere with the carrying out of these recommendations, then there is room for the exercise of a little individual enterprise in order to make good the omission on the earliest available opportunity.

2. A second resolution might well have reference to self-indulgence in the matter of food, commonly called greediness. What is the reason why, whereas it rarely happens that any single boy in the school is too unwell to go home at Christmas, it is not uncommon for a good many of us to be too unwell to return to school on the appointed day at the end of the vacation? Is it not, sometimes at least, simply this, that we have partaken, "not wisely but too well," of the delicacies of the season; or, in plain English, that we have eaten more than is good for us. Not that the prospect of those minor ailments which sometimes keep us at home is likely to act as a powerfully deterrent motive. They may serve (in retrospect) as a sign that moderation has been exceeded, rather than (in anticipation) as in themselves a motive for avoiding excess. The best and highest motive for the avoidance of excess is plain enough. We wish to be like our Lord; and this kind of self-indulgence is assuredly not the way to attain that likeness.

3. Thirdly, there is the matter of late hours. Of

course it will reasonably and legitimately happen that now and again during the holidays, on occasion of some ball or party, late hours will form a part of the domestic programme, to which we must accommodate ourselves. In this, of course, there is no harm whatsoever; though such occasions as these may afford the opportunity for a good deal of self-control and self-watchfulness. But there is a careless habit, into which some of us may be apt to fall, of staying up late at night, not at all in order to fall in with family arrangements, or for the sake of charitably entertaining others, but simply for our own self-gratification. It may be that we wish to continue some more or less light and frivolous reading, or to prolong some not very profitable conversation. Or it may be that we wish to play the man (as we think) by inflicting our company on our elders in the smoking-room; sometimes to their annoyance, and sometimes (quite unintentionally on our part) to their amusement. Now, there is no commandment of the Decalogue which says: "Thou shalt not sit up late"; but there is a counsel of Christian common-sense which warns us against mischievous self-indulgence; and that this form of self-indulgence is mischievous may be seen from its effects on our night prayers, on our morning prayers, and on the likelihood of our hearing week-day Mass. The habit of reasonably early rising is, it need hardly be said, healthful and salutary for soul and body

alike. The boy, or the man, who lies late abed in the morning begins the day badly, and exposes himself to many temptations. And late rising is a sure consequence, in the long-run, of keeping late hours at night.

4. Then, fourthly, there is the matter of undesirable or questionable company. Whether it be among grooms and stable-boys in the backyard, or among the sons and nephews of the nearest nobleman, there may be, within the circle of our acquaintance, some associate whose conversation, as we know by experience, will do us no good, and may do us much harm. And while we do well to be on our guard against contamination from the conversation of others, still more should we beware of ourselves setting a bad example, and of helping to undo the work which our Lord came to do in the world—besides disfiguring His image and likeness in ourselves—by any kind of sinful or loose talk. Our Lord Himself declared that it is not the meats which the Jews regarded as unclean that in truth defile a man; but that he is defiled by the evil that proceeds from his own mouth. Once more, then, let us beware of profaning those lips which have so often received the Sacrament of our Lord's love; or we shall run the risk, sooner or later, of defiling those bodies of ours which are His temple. This, then, is a fourth point on which it will be wise for us to make our resolutions very carefully beforehand.

5. And, lastly, if, while we are at home, the opportunity should arise, or rather, if we can find or make an opportunity, of being kind to those who in temporal matters are less favourably circumstanced than ourselves, such opportunities are by no means to be missed. It may be that there is some sick member of our own family, or one who for some reason or other is rather apt to be forgotten or overlooked, and who may be very grateful for some little attention such as it will cost us but a slight effort to show. Or the priest of our parish may be glad of our assistance in organising some little entertainment for the children of the poor; or he will, if we ask him, suggest some other way in which we may make ourselves useful. At any rate, we will make up our minds not to shirk, or avoid, or leave to others, an occasion of doing something that will be very pleasing to Him who became a poor child, born in a wayside stable, for love of us.

XV.

NAZARETH *

"And He went down to Nazareth . . . and was subject to them."—ST LUKE ii. 51.

WE learn from the New Testament and from our Catechism that the eternal Word, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became Man to save us from sin and hell, and to teach us the way to heaven. And yet, when we read the story of His life in the Gospels, we might almost be tempted to think that it could not have been for this purpose that He came. For, if so, why did He put off for so long a time the beginning of His public ministry? Why did He spend by far the greater part of His life in a remote village, engaged in the occupation of a carpenter? And why did He choose that no record of all those years should be preserved, beyond the bare mention of His trade by St Mark, and those four or five words of St Luke: "He was subject

* Sunday, January 24, 1904 (Feast of the Holy Family).

to them"; *i.e.*, to His foster-father St Joseph, and to his mother the Blessed Virgin Mary? He had said to Mary, when with St Joseph she sought Him in the Temple: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"* thereby clearly setting the claims of God above the claims of home. And yet, immediately afterwards, we read that "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them." Was not this to neglect His Father's business? Was not this to lay aside the work for which He had come?

Not so. For in fact, strange as it may seem, this hidden life in an obscure village was His Father's business for the time being; this trade of a carpenter was an integral part of the very work which He had come to do. He had come to redeem us, yes, to redeem us by His death; but He would first set us a pattern by living a man's life on earth. He had come to teach us, yes, to teach us by His words; but first He would teach us by His example. And the lessons which He taught by His hidden life at Nazareth were so important, and so difficult to learn, that He judged it well to spend some twenty years—or thirty years if we count His infancy and early boyhood—in teaching them. He came, indeed, to teach all men, but especially the poor; not merely because He loved the virtues of the poor, their simplicity, humility, patience, and so forth, but

* St Luke ii. 49.

because, the world being constituted as it is, the majority of men must always be comparatively poor, and must of necessity earn their livelihood by manual labour. He would spend the chief part of His life in teaching those lessons which were most needed by the greater part of mankind.

In the days when our Lord lived on earth, manual labour was regarded as in a manner degrading. The working man was looked down upon and despised. Or rather, the working man was usually a slave, and the work which he did was considered to be unworthy of a free citizen. His lot was a very unenviable one, with no prospects to speak of in this world, and with no one to hold out to him the hope of a future life. This, of course, was not so among the Jewish people, but it was so in the great Roman empire which the Church of Christ was to convert and to conquer by a peaceful victory. Among the signs of His divine mission—before He had openly declared His divine nature—our Lord specified this: *Pauperes evangelizantur*—"The poor have the Gospel preached to them"; * or, as we may otherwise render the text—since the word "gospel" means "good tidings"—"Good tidings are told to the poor." And it was indeed good news for the poor, that in the eyes of God they were in no degree inferior to their more prosperous neighbours; that their toil, their poverty, their privations, if borne with patience,

* St Matt. xi. 5.

were most precious in His sight; that they were but the fellow-servants of their own masters; and that the obedience which they showed to those under whom they lived, and for whom they worked, was full of merit, however wicked, overbearing, or even cruel those masters might be. If rendered with a right motive, it was an acceptable service to God Himself, and would have an eternal reward from Him. This was indeed good news for the poor. And it came to them not merely as a piece of theoretical instruction. It came to them strengthened and enforced by the example of their Divine Master Himself. It was indeed good news for the poor that the Saviour of the world had chosen to be born in a stable, and that poor shepherds were the first to receive an invitation to that crib which was His first royal throne—even as the Cross was to be His last throne on earth. Good news for the poor that twelve poor men, fishermen and the like, were chosen to be the foundation stones of His kingdom on earth. But, most of all, good news for the poor that He, the Lord of heaven and earth, had devoted the best years (humanly speaking) of His life on earth to occupations such as theirs. Not even the priest, with all his privileges and responsibilities, can say to himself that our Lord spent most of His time in work such as that which he is called upon to do. That is the special blessing of the poor; and it gives to them that sense of companionship with Jesus and

Mary and Joseph—with the Holy Family as they are affectionately and devoutly called—which has sanctified so many millions of humble Christian households during the long lapse of many centuries.

Good news for the poor! No wonder that it was from the ranks of the poor that the first Christian converts were mainly recruited. And the virtues of these poor converts, artisans and slaves, their humility, their charity, their patience, their constancy under persecution and torture, bore fruit at last in the conversion of the rich also; and the Christian religion, which began in the stable in Bethlehem, at last reigned supreme in the palace of the Cæsars. Good news for the poor! Surely it behooves us, as faithful followers of Jesus, not only always to love the poor, and to help them in their necessities to the very utmost of our power, but also to hold in great reverence those whom it has pleased Him so to honour.

Good news for the poor! But it would be a great mistake to imagine that the lessons of the hidden life of our Lord at Nazareth are for the poor alone. No, they are if possible even more necessary for the rich than for the poor. For we learn from our Lord's life, and from this part of it especially, a truth which otherwise we might have failed to grasp, viz., that if we wish to render ourselves pleasing to Him, we must, even though we should be rich beyond the dreams of avarice, practise the virtues of the poor. We must be poor in spirit, if we are not poor in fact;

that is to say, we must hold at God's disposal whatever share of the good things of the world we may happen to possess; ever ready to use it for His purposes and in His service, according as we may be able to interpret His will. For though we should have a whole retinue of servants, employés, dependants, to wait on our pleasure and minister to our needs, we are all the while but servants ourselves; and they—whom we are so apt to regard as inferior beings because they occupy a humble station—are our brethren and our fellow-servants; children of the same Heavenly Father, servants of the same Divine Master.

And then there is another lesson, perhaps the most important of all for us here and now, to be learned from the hidden life of our Lord. "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them." We are, naturally, so fond of our independence. We do so want to be free from the restraints of school life, or perhaps even of home life. We want to be men; to begin at least to make our way in the world; perhaps to cut a dash, and to swagger a little;—but, above all, to be free. Now there is, of course, a right kind of manliness, which we all do well to cultivate; the manliness of self-restraint; the manliness of one who has a serious purpose in life. And there is a right kind of independence; the independence which emancipates us from the bondage of human respect; the independence of one who understands that he has

his own soul to save, and who will not allow himself to be led astray by any example or persuasion. But there is nothing in subjection and obedience to our lawful superiors which is contrary to this true manliness, to this true independence. Will any one dare to say that our Lord, the very pattern of manliness, was unmanly? What then was He doing at the age when so many young people are beginning to sigh for their liberty? "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them"; and in this subjection He lived till He was thirty years of age. A great and supreme lesson in obedience. A lesson which we have daily opportunities of putting in practice, both here and in our homes. It is a lesson which we show that we have yet to learn more thoroughly, not only when we so far forget ourselves as to be openly insubordinate or impertinent, but also when such obedience as we give is rendered in a grudging or sullen manner; or when we deliberately do what we know will give annoyance to those under whom we live; or again, when we indulge in the bad habit of grumbling, and of criticising and finding fault with what is said and done by them; or when we show stubbornness of judgment, and are wanting in reasonable docility.

If it were to happen—as it might so easily happen—to any one of us to die young; and if it were possible to inscribe as a truthful epitaph over his grave just these two words: *Erat subditus*—"He

was obedient" — obedient to the laws of God and man; this would be a record not, perhaps, highly valued by the world, but full of honour in His sight of whose life at Nazareth we have no other history than this. *Erat subditus*—"He was obedient": nor did His obedience cease with His boyhood, but for our sakes, and for our instruction and encouragement, He was "obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." *

* Philip. ii. 8.

XVI.

LIFE'S CONTEST *

"And therefore we also, having so great a cloud of witnesses round about us, laying aside every weight and encumbrance of sin, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us; looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith; who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame; and now sitteth at the right hand of God. . . . Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight steps with your feet; that no one, halting may go out of the way," (or "turn aside from the course").—HEB. xii. 1, 2, 12, 13.

IN the portion of the first Epistle to the Corinthians which is appointed to be read in the Mass for Septuagesima Sunday, St Paul compares the Christian life to an athletic contest.† He was addressing himself to Greeks, a people with whom the Olympian and Isthmian games assumed the proportions of a national event, and whose enthusiasm for every kind of athletic exercise was far in excess of anything that we see even in this country, and in these days of

* Sunday, January 31, 1904 (Septuagesima).

† 1 Cor. ix. 24-27.

muscular Christianity and muscular paganism. He reminds his converts, then, that those who engage in these contests must needs undergo a long and painful process of training, during which, as he forcibly puts it, they have to abstain from "all sorts of things." (Our version says "all things"; but the phrase "all sorts of things" more nearly represents the meaning of the original.) And he drives home the comparison between the athlete and the Christian by means of certain implied contrasts. Of the athletes who contend on the race-course only one can win the prize; but in the spiritual race every one is rewarded, provided only that he runs according to the rules. For them, the prize is a garland of bay-leaves that quickly fade ("a corruptible crown" as our version has it); for us the reward is life everlasting, the possession of God for all eternity. And then the Apostle shifts the scene from the race-course to the boxing-ring. Speaking, now, of himself personally, he tells us that he is not like one of those unskilled and untutored combatants whose misdirected blows fail to reach their mark, and only cleave the air; but that he has his adversary well before him; that this adversary is his own body, which he makes it his business by chastisement to bring into subjection; and that he strikes only to strike home. *Castigo corpus meum*—"I chastise my body," he says; using a verb, ὑπωπιάζειν, which means, literally, "to strike under the eye," or, as we might say, "to give a black

eye" to some one, or, more generally, "to beat black and blue," as we may learn by consulting our Greek lexicons. It is to be noted that St Paul, when he wishes to emphasise a point strongly, does not shrink from the use of forcible and graphic language; and so he here describes himself as an accomplished "bruiser" in the spiritual combat.

The same idea of the spiritual life as a race or an athletic contest is put before us, in a somewhat different and more elaborate setting, in the passage from the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, of which we read a few verses just now. After extolling, in the preceding chapter, some of the examples of fortitude and fidelity, of which we read in the Old Testament, (since he could not then allege those of Christian saints who had not yet lived,) the writer invites us to regard those heroes of old as the spectators in a vast amphitheatre—for this is the true purport of the phrase, "a cloud of witnesses," which is analogous to our expression, "a sea of faces." We are to think of them, then, as the spectators in an amphitheatre, on the arena of which we now stand, as competitors or combatants.

Propositum certamen—"a contest set before us," or "proposed to us," is what he calls our life's work as Christians. It is a contest to which we are bidden and invited by our Lord Himself, who in the words *Auctor fidei*, is here represented as the *Editor ludorum*, the founder or originator of the competition.

It is He who offers the prize, and He who lays down the conditions under which we are to compete, conditions accurately proportioned to the strength of each. Nay, more than this, He Himself before us has fought, and has been victorious on our behalf. This is the idea which is peculiar to the similitude as it occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the text has just this advantage over the somewhat similar passage from the Epistle to the Corinthians, that it introduces the thought of the imitation of Christ; a thought on which it may be well for us, as far as possible, to concentrate our attention at this season. Christ our Lord does not ask us to do anything which He Himself, as Man, has not done beforehand for our example and encouragement. Or rather, He does not ask of us more than the merest fraction of what He has done and suffered for us.

Having then the prize set before us, being as we are in presence of a cloud of witnesses, *i.e.*, of the saints in heaven who behold us, sympathise with us in our struggles, and cheer us on, what is it that we are here invited to do? To "lay aside," says the Apostle, "every clinging weight of sin." A man does not put a couple of bricks in his pocket, or wrap himself in a cloak (like Milo in Cicero's speech) when he is going to run a race. He not only at the moment throws aside these impediments and encumbrances, but beforehand avoids all manner of harmful self-indulgence, and takes all the means he

knows to harden his muscles and sinews; in a word, does all he can to keep himself in prime condition. And shall we fail to do as much for that life's contest on which our eternal destinies depend; for which all the athletic competitions that ever were held, are but a faint image and a fleeting shadow? We are too prone to think of this world as the solid reality, and to regard our future life as something shadowy and remote; whereas it is now that we live in the midst of shadows, and it is the unseen things which in very deed are real. This we shall learn at last, when the dream of this life has gone by, and the true daylight of eternity has dawned upon us. It is then that we shall pass, and shall understand, beyond the possibility of mistake, that we have passed, in the words of Cardinal Newman, *ex umbris et imaginibus ad veritatem*—that is to say, from phantom shadows to the solid reality of truth.

"Wherefore," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "lift up your hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight steps with your feet." We all know that a man who is running a race does not, unless he is quite exhausted or has quite lost heart, run with his hands hanging loosely and limp by his side, but keeps his elbows bent at the correct angle, and clenches his hands; and that he does not drag his feet, but lifts them well from the ground; and moreover, that he does not allow himself to wobble from side to side, but makes straight

for the goal. And St Paul, who was an observant man, had noted these things, and had seen in them an analogy with—or a parable of—the spiritual life. He saw that his converts were growing somewhat limp and languid in spiritual matters, that they had lost their first fervour and were losing heart; and so he addresses to them that exhortation which we have been studying.

As has been already implied, the contest to which we are bidden by our Lord is analogous to what is called in sporting language, a handicap. It is, moreover, a handicap which is being readjusted at every step in the race. That which each one is called upon to do at any particular moment is precisely and most accurately proportioned to his strength at that moment. The conditions for different men, and for the same men at different times vary very greatly, and are determined by Him who made us, and who knows each one of us so immeasurably better than we know ourselves. And so our efforts may be demanded for very different purposes. For one it may be a hand-to-hand struggle with some importunate temptation to grievous sin, or even the overcoming of a gravely sinful habit to which he has had the misfortune to allow himself to become enslaved. Another may hardly know, at least by experience, what it is to be severely tempted; and his allotted task may be to overcome some natural sluggishness and to be more earnest about his work; or to

overcome a hot and hasty or a surly and sullen temper; or to "reduce"—as the doctors say—some swelling of pride; or to coerce into order the vagaries of a too lively and wandering imagination; or to check a tongue which is too prone to grumbling, critical, and ill-natured remarks. The examples which have just been given concern only venial faults and the common imperfections of our daily lives. But whatever our spiritual state and condition may be, we are invited, and encouraged by our Lord's example and by the words of his Apostle, to make a good fight, either for the extirpation of vice or for the acquisition of a higher degree of virtue. When St Paul speaks of his own spiritual combats, we are not to suppose that he was always on the brink of mortal sin, or that so long as he kept himself free from mortal sin he would have considered himself at liberty to fold his arms as one whose task was finished, and who had nothing more to do. He knew very well that from those to whom greater gifts are given more is expected, and that a man can never do enough for that Divine Master who spared not to shed even the last drop of His blood for us. And we too have need to be often reminded of the law of generosity towards God. It is a law which should govern all our actions. It should run through our whole lives, making them all of a piece, and not like a patchwork quilt, with bright spots representing our moments of piety in a sea of dull colours

corresponding to the general texture of our daily actions.

But, to come back to the simile of a struggle, or contest, or race, with which we started, we have to remember in conclusion that our spiritual combat will not cease with our life here at school; that it will not come to an end with the end of our year of rhetoric, or when we have achieved the proud distinction of a Higher Certificate. Again and again we have to remind ourselves that the task which God has set us for the years which we are spending in this College is to fit ourselves for the harder tasks of our after lives. And in order that we may so fit ourselves, it is of the utmost importance to cultivate, while we are still young, those habits of uprightness and truthfulness, of steady application to work, and —be it added—of an unselfish zeal for the general good, which are so necessary on the one hand for success in the profession of our choice, and on the other hand that we may become useful members of society. These habits fall under the head of what are called "natural virtues," but they may be hallowed by a right intention; and the self-conquest which is involved in their acquisition, and in the formation of a strong and manly character, is no small part of the contest which is "set before us" by Jesus Christ Himself.

Yet another point. Some of us may have occasion to ask ourselves whether God is calling us to some-

thing better than any of the professions which are open to the layman. Some, no doubt, have long since made up their minds that they have the strength and the courage to devote their whole lives and all their powers to His more immediate service in the ecclesiastical state. Others will have long since made up their minds that these things are not for them, and will have made their choice of some other occupation or profession. But there will always be some who have their election yet to make, and it is well that they should face the question betimes. For such as have yet to choose, the making of the choice is part of the *certamen propositum*, of the contest in which they are bidden to engage.

XVII.

THE BEWITCHMENT OF TRIFLES AND THE POWER OF THE CROSS*

"O senseless Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Christ hath been set forth crucified."—GAL. iii. 1.†

"THE bewitchment of trifling," we read in the Book of Wisdom, "obscureth"—or shuts out the view of—"good things; and the waywardness of evil desires overturneth the innocent mind."‡ In a general way, we all know that this is true. And

* Sunday, February 7, 1904 (Sexagesima).

† The Douay Version has "crucified among you." The Vulgate (agreeing herein with the Greek *textus receptus*) has "ante quorum oculos Jesus Christus præscriptus est in vobis crucifixus," where the words "in vobis" may be construed either with "præscriptus est" or with "crucifixus." The former construction seems to me preferable, and is followed in the Revised Version. But as these words, and their original in Greek (ἐν ὑμῖν), have no place in the best MSS., Greek and Latin, they are probably (as Cornely and others hold) no part of the true text, and are here omitted.

‡ Wisd. iv. 12.

it is possible that for some of us it may not be necessary to travel beyond our own experience during the last few months, in order to find illustrations of its truth. It is not so very long ago since most of us were engaged in our annual "retreat," here in this College. There were certain "good things," truths of faith, principles of conduct, wise resolutions, of which we then obtained, relatively speaking, a clear view, or which we then took to heart and made our own. Have we, since then, kept these truths before our minds, or have we in part, or occasionally, or frequently, or even habitually, lost sight of them? Have we lived in accordance with those principles of conduct which then seemed to us sound and reasonable? Have we kept those resolutions which at that time, perhaps, we thought it almost impossible that we should ever break? Thank God there is reason to hope that many of us could say with truth, in the secrecy of our own consciences, that we have kept these truths before our minds, that we have tried to shape our lives by these principles of conduct, that we have—substantially at least—been faithful to our good resolutions. Please God, there are many of us for whom our last retreat was what it ought to have been, a fresh start in life, the beginning of a visible improvement in all those departments of life and conduct with which religion, as such, is concerned. And please God the advance, the growth,

the development which is visible to the eye of God alone, is even more marked than that which can be noted by the necessarily somewhat casual and short-sighted observation of our fellow-men. And so far as this can be said of any of us, or of many of us, there is much, very much, to be deeply thankful for.

Nevertheless, it is possible that with some of us the symptoms may be not quite so favourable. It is possible that some of us might have to acknowledge—if we spoke quite honestly—a certain falling off since the end of our last retreat. In such a case as is here supposed, it is not merely that we do not *feel* quite so fervent as we did then, for we cannot always command our feelings; but some one finds, perhaps, that he has been falling more frequently into those faults which he had set himself to conquer, or perhaps into more serious faults of the same kind; possibly even into deliberate mortal sin, or, worse still, into mortal sins again and again repeated.

Now, if this should be the case with any of us, what is the reason of it? Is it not just this, that "the bewitchment of trifles" has, to a greater or less extent, with greater or less frequency, blotted out for us the view of those "good things" of which we were put in mind just now? While our attention was resolutely fixed on our relations with God, our Creator and Redeemer, while that fear of God which

is the beginning of wisdom, was a living and present force in our souls, and when our hearts had been stirred to some degree, at least, of that love of God which is the fulfilment of the law, so long we managed to "keep ourselves straight"; we fought against temptation, and we shunned occasions of sin. But since then, perhaps, one may have fallen under the evil influence of some companion who has led him into mischief. Another may perchance have gone even further than this, and may have helped to draw others, younger than himself, into sin; and if there be any such among us, let him beware; for we know the hard words which our Lord spoke concerning such as these. Another may have fallen not quite so low, but still may have given up or relaxed the resolute endeavour promptly to resist evil thoughts; and so, as we read, in the *Imitation of Christ*, a simple imagination, being indulged, has given rise to a vehement desire, and the desire has borne its rotten fruit in sinful action. Or again, another may have begun—or more than begun—to give a loose rein to his tongue, and to use language from which, a few months ago, he had learned to abstain. In another, pride may have been at work, giving birth to selfish envy and jealousy, or to anger and ill-temper, or to disobedience, self-will, sulkiness, and so forth. Or laziness and idleness may have prevented another from making that progress which he ought to have

made in virtue as well as in learning, besides exposing him, as may so easily be the case, to a whole crowd of temptations which might have been avoided by the simple means of genuine diligence.

These, it is plain, are only examples of the kind of thing which may or might have happened to one or other among us; and it is for each one to look into himself, and see for himself, whether, in any particular, the description may happen to fit him. And the point to which we may more especially direct our attention is that these things, whatever they are, which have led us out of the straight path, which have caused us to relax our efforts, which have come between us and God, are trifles; and that a man's conduct in allowing himself to be thus led astray is mere folly. It is indeed a worse than childish folly; for, as the proverb has it, "the burnt child fears the fire"; but, if we have sinned repeatedly, ours has been, rather, the senseless folly of the moth which flies again and again into the flame. And in connection with this subject of trifles, it is well to remind ourselves that even small faults, if we allow ourselves easily and habitually to fall into them, very surely predispose us for greater and more serious offences. And this, not merely because one who habitually yields to his unruly inclinations in small matters will not be likely to stand firm when he is assaulted by some grievous temptation; but also because, if we are reckless and thoughtless in our

ordinary behaviour, it is very difficult, at set times, to recall our minds to those more serious considerations which most concern our spiritual welfare. In this sense also it is the case that "the bewitchment of trifles obscureth"—or shuts out the view of—"good things." The more we can make our life "all of a piece," the more we can learn to regulate all our conduct, in every part of the house and outside the house, by fixed and rational principles, the better it will be for the formation of our character, for our peace of mind, and for the welfare of our souls.

And now, it may be assumed that, if in any degree we have allowed ourselves to fall under this "bewitchment of trifling," our better self is displeased with this unwisdom of ours; and that we wish—even in spite of our lower inclinations—that we had not been so foolish and ill-advised. And this being so, a second point which we may usefully consider is this, that St Paul, in that text from the Epistle to the Galatians which we read just now, supplies or suggests a remedy for our fickleness; and that remedy is the thought or remembrance of Jesus Christ crucified. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you . . . before whose eyes Jesus Christ is set forth, crucified?"

The word used in the Latin version of this text is *præscriptus:—ante quorum oculos Jesus Christus præscriptus est, crucifixus.* In the Greek text it is προεγράφη. Both words mean "written up," as it

were, on a wall or a notice-board. In fact the Apostle seems to be alluding to the custom of posting up notices in public places, as Ancus Martius is said to have posted up the laws of Numa in the Roman forum.

And it would seem that—speaking, of course, in similitudes—he thought of the words, *Jesus Christus crucifixus*, or *crucifixus est*, as such an inscription, put up for a permanent and ever-visible reminder to all beholders. Now we have something better in the way of a reminder than a mere inscription. We have that which St Paul's Galatians had not: our crucifix, that visible memorial of the Passion and death of our Lord, which is so dear to the heart of every Christian.

Let us never forget or lose sight of the manifold virtues of the Cross of Christ, and its claims on our regard and veneration. The Cross is the pulpit from which Christ, as Prophet and Teacher, proclaims His message to mankind; the Cross is the altar on which our great High Priest offered His atoning sacrifice; the Cross is the throne of Christ our King, for it was as a king that He died, wearing His crown, and with the title above His head, proclaiming His royal state. The Cross is the sword wherewith He has put His enemies to flight; the Cross is the chariot wherein He rode to victory; the Cross is the trophy of His triumph; the Cross, the standard under which we must fight if we would share that victory and that

triumph. Christ crucified is the object of our faith, the Cross of Christ is the anchor of our hope, the Cross is the magnet wherewith He would draw our love; for it was He Himself who said that when He should be lifted up, He would draw all things—or rather, all men—to Himself. The Cross is the ladder whereby we must climb to heaven; the Cross is the balance whereon was weighed out the price of our redemption, and whereon the sorrows and the joys of this life are weighed, and are found to be of no account by comparison with the endless pains and the eternal happiness of the world to come. The Cross of Christ is the tree of true knowledge, the Cross of Christ the veritable tree of life, whereof we are not forbidden, but invited by Jesus Himself, and by Mary, the second Eve, to eat the precious fruit. The Cross is as a beacon shining from afar, beckoning us on and guiding our steps; it is a sign raised aloft, high above the trifles and vanities of the world, fixed and unmovable amid all their changeful vicissitudes; it is as a mark from which all distances are measured, and a standard by which all values are appraised. The Cross is a sure refuge, to which, if we do but cling, we are safe against all the storms of temptation. The Cross is as a lectern whereon is laid open the book of life; and presently that book is taken down from its lectern and laid, still open, on Mary's knee. And as we learned our first lessons at our mother's knee, let us beseech her to teach us the

lessons which are there set down. There, written in letters of blood, on that blurred and mishandled page, she will teach us to read the lesson of man's ingratitude to God, the lesson of the enormity of sin, the lesson of God's love for man, notwithstanding that ingratitude; the lesson of faith, the lesson of hope, the lesson of love, the lesson of purity, the lesson of courage, and of that true Christian manliness which is proof against "the bewitchment of trifling."

XVIII.

THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS*

"We preach Christ crucified."—1 Cor. i. 23.

We read in St Luke's Gospel that when our Lord, speaking to His apostles towards the close of His public ministry, foretold to them His coming Passion and death, they "did not understand" the word which He spoke to them.† How was this? The expressions which He used, as reported by the Evangelists, were perfectly plain. "The Son of Man shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and scourged, and crucified." Such was the substance of the announcement, an announcement made more than once. The scourging of criminals by the Roman soldiery was in those days only too common; and it was a punishment not carried out (as in our prisons) in the exclusive

* March 6, 1904 (Third Sunday in Lent).

† "Et ipsi nihil horum intellexerunt, et erat verbum istud absconditum ab eis, et non intelligebant" (St Luke xviii. 34). The accumulation of equivalent phrases in the verse is remarkable.

presence of a few officials, but in full view of any one who cared—or could approach near enough—to see it. So, too, when our Lord foretold that He should be crucified, the idea expressed by the term was only too familiar. Some at least of the disciples must have actually seen thieves or other malefactors dying or hanging dead on their crosses in the waste grounds outside the walls of Jerusalem. Yet they "did not understand." How came it, and in what sense was it, that they did not understand?

The explanation, it would seem, must be something of this kind. They thought our Lord's prediction so incredible that they contrived to persuade themselves that He must be using figurative language. They loved Him so much that they could not and would not believe that it could come to this. How should they believe that His glorious mission was to end in what must necessarily look like a disastrous failure? They were so confident that He was going to establish, or re-establish, the kingdom (according to their own idea of the kingdom), that they could not credit a prediction which, if they accepted it as literal truth, must needs seem to give the lie to these high hopes and anticipations. And so it came about that they did not understand a prediction of which the meaning was, after all, so painfully and, as it might have been thought, so unmistakably plain.

Nay, long years after the prediction had been fulfilled to the letter, after our Lord had been

"crucified, dead, and buried," and after He had risen again and ascended into heaven, the *scandulum crucis* was a standing difficulty to the Apostles in their preaching of the Gospel. "We preach Christ crucified," writes St Paul, "to the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness." For—as he had said just before—"the Jews demand a sign," a sign of power, of majesty, of glory, "and the Greeks seek after," or look for, a manifestation of "wisdom"; whereas the Cross seemed to the Jews a symbol of weakness, failure, defeat, dishonour, while to the Greeks or Gentiles, the claim that One who had been crucified as a malefactor was yet the Lord and Master of all seemed downright and utter folly. But St Paul, nothing daunted by the supercilious contempt of Jews and Greeks alike, boldly sets forth the burden of his message to mankind in the words which have already in part been quoted, and which may now be repeated with their conclusion: "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness, but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

"Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." For wisdom is then most strikingly shown when it achieves its ends by the most unlooked-for and apparently inadequate means, and strength or power is then most convincingly declared when it

* 1 Cor. i. 22-24.

prevails over what might have seemed to be the most overwhelming odds.

The disciples, then, did not understand the mystery of the Cross when it was first declared beforehand, and of the earliest generation of Christians many hardly understood it even after it had been enacted. And there are vast multitudes of men who, even at the present day, do not in the very least understand the mystery of the Cross; nay, there are some, and their number is perhaps increasing, who openly blaspheme it. And even among those who believe in the fact of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and who acknowledge Him as Lord, there are very many who have but a dull and dim perception of the bearing of the mystery of the Cross on human life in general, and on their own individual lives in particular.

But we have abundant opportunities of understanding, at least in part, this divine-human mystery. We understand that our Lord became Man, not that He might overcome by main force the kingdoms of the world, but that He might make a conquest of men's hearts; that He came, not merely to plead man's cause with God by this sacrifice of His life, but also to plead God's cause with man, and that nothing could have appealed more forcibly to men's love than His Passion, crucifixion, and death. We understand that He came to win in the first instance the hearts of the poor, the despised, the afflicted; for as a

simple historical fact it was through the poor and the despised, through slaves and artisans, that, by a gradual upward leavening of society, the great Roman Empire was at last converted; and even the dullest of us can see that there was no better means by which He could appeal to the downcast and the down-trodden than by taking, as it were, the very lowest place among them, and so giving them hope and ennobling their estate. And from His example we have long since learned, or ought to have learned, that poverty, humiliation, suffering, disappointment, failure (so long as the failure is not the outcome of our own fault), is so far from being a mark of God's displeasure, that these things are, on the contrary, a means whereby we are drawn nearer to Him who is our hope and our salvation, if only we use these so-called misfortunes to good purpose.

If only we use these misfortunes to good purpose. Some one may ask, perhaps, why we should be called upon to think about things so unpleasant as disappointment, failure, suffering, and the like. They seem to us, perhaps, contingencies so remote from us as to have no relation to our present life here at school, which is or should be—on the whole—ever bright and cheerful. But after all we are no longer children; and our business here is not merely to pass this present time, but to prepare for our future; and of this future we are old enough—all of us—at least to begin to take a serious view. Now we may

depend upon it that human life, in whatsoever rank of society, is full of disappointments, of unpleasant experiences of one kind or another, that must be endured either willingly or unwillingly. And that man is to be pitied who has not his share of such experiences; for, speaking quite generally, they are the only things that will sober us and keep us humble. But the real misfortune is that misfortune so called (that is to say, temporal misfortune) does not always sober men and keep them humble. Sometimes it has the very opposite effect, and makes them reckless and rebellious; and so they are the losers both in this world and in the next. The penitent and the impenitent thief who were crucified with our Lord will serve for all time as primary object-lessons in the good and the bad use of suffering. However, there is no need to dwell at greater length on what may seem to some of us a black and gloomy view of the future; even though the very purpose of what has been said is to give some indication of the way in which darkness may be turned into light, if only we have the good sense to acquire in time, and to apply on occasion, the wisdom of the Cross. But it is of more immediate importance for us to endeavour to turn to good account the minor crosses, the lesser disappointments, of our life here and now. Not one of these is too small to be made an occasion either of merit if we have the sense to bear it patiently, or of sin if we lose patience and repine or sulk, or allow

ourselves to become embittered either against our companions or against those who are placed over us. But more than this. If we are wise, we shall not be content with bearing crosses patiently, we shall even thank God for them; and not one of them is too small to justify such an act of thanksgiving. Does this seem a hard saying, a strange counsel? If we will but gaze on our crucifix and meditate on our crucifix, it will not seem hard or strange. Do we not wish to be near our Lord? Do we not wish to be like Him? Let us recall to mind the words of Ethai the Gethite when he came to the help of David in his misfortunes, and David bade him return to his own country and not to imperil his life for his sake. But Ethai said: "As the Lord liveth, and as my Lord the King liveth, wheresoever thou shalt be, Lord my King, there will thy servant be." * Do not these words echo the inmost heart's thought of many of us, at least in our better moments? And if some of us should never have seriously looked at the matter in this light, we may begin to look at it in this light now. In Christ Crucified is our hope and our salvation; He is the way, the truth, and the life. The more we resemble Him the surer our hope, the more abundant our salvation. His way, "the King's highway of the Cross," as à Kempis calls it, is the surest we can tread; and not the least important part of the truth which He came to reveal was this, that in and through suffer-

* 2 Kings (2 Sam.) xv. 21.

ing and death we attain to true health and true life.

"In the Cross is salvation," says the author of the *Imitation of Christ*, "in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection from our enemies." And thoughts such as these about Jesus crucified are more especially appropriate during the holy season of Lent. It is a season of penance for sin; it is also, as experience shows, a season in which our virtue is apt to be tried by various ailments incident to boyhood. These little ailments are too often the occasion of a good deal of demoralisation, of fretfulness, of self-indulgence; nay, they might even become the occasion of more serious sin. It is for each one of us to be on our guard lest our enemy should gain an easy victory over us, and with a manly courage and generosity to put in practice now what we have learned of the wisdom of the Cross. Remember the words of St Paul: "That which is light and momentary of our present tribulation is not worthy to be compared with the eternal weight of glory that is in store for us."* And those of St James: "Brethren count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations," that is to say, tribulations; "knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work."† And again those of St Peter: "Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. † St James i. 1.

same thought; . . . [and] if you partake of the suffering of Christ, rejoice, that when His glory shall be revealed you may also be glad with exceeding great joy."* It would be a mistake to wait for great occasions to put into execution these high and noble maxims; we must begin by applying them to our lesser and more present needs. So shall we grow in true Christian wisdom as we advance in years and in secular knowledge.

* 1 Peter iv. 1, 13.

XIX.

MY CRUCIFIX*

"Brethren, I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."—1 COR. ii. 2.

A CHARACTERISTIC story is told by Father Soulier, in his *Life of St Philip Benizi*, which may fitly serve to introduce the subject that is now to engage our attention. The saint was on his death-bed, and had almost lost the power of speech, when he managed to utter the words "My book! I want my book." Those who were in attendance on him brought him the Holy Scriptures, his breviary, the book of the rules of his Order (for he was the Father General of the Servites); but he signified that none of these was what he wished for. At last some one brought him his crucifix; and then the dying saint made it plain that his desire had been rightly interpreted. This, and this alone, was the book which he needed.

* March 13, 1904 (Fourth Sunday in Lent).

And a somewhat similar story is told of one whose name is more familiar to us all than that of St Philip Benizi. It is related that St Thomas of Aquino having occasion one day to visit the illustrious Franciscan, St Bonaventure, asked him to show him his library. St Bonaventure answered the request by pointing to the crucifix above his *prie-dieu*. There, he said, was the source of all the knowledge he possessed.

Now we cannot all be saints in the sense and in the degree in which St Philip and St Bonaventure were saints. But in this particular we can all imitate them, that there is no one of us, however young, however backward in other respects, or again, however sinful, to whom the crucifix ought not to be a book full of the most sublime, the most consoling, the most stimulating, and at the same time the most homely and practical lessons. People who are making their first efforts to acquire the art of meditation are often puzzled what to be at; they do not know how to begin; and if they take a book as a necessary help, meditation is apt to shade off into mere reading, which is good, of course, but is not quite the same thing. It may be suggested, as a partial solution of this difficulty, that our crucifix ought always to provide us with matter for at least a short meditation, such as is suitable to those whose occupations allow them to spend but a few moments in this holy exercise.

And in the first place I am to remember that it is in a very true and profound sense *my* crucifix. And this is not to be understood, of course, merely in the sense that I or my parents have paid a few shillings or pence for this particular image of Christ crucified which I hold in my hand, or which hangs by my bedside. It is in the sense that all the fruits of the mystery which that image represents are mine, my very own, just as if there were no one else in the whole world to share them with me. This is not the same as saying that, if no one else had existed, our Lord would have died for me alone. There is no use in making—and we have no warrant for making—absurd suppositions, and it would have been a strange world which should have contained no one but ourselves. But it is true that, whereas our Lord died for all men, He did not divide the fruits of His passion and death so that each should have, as it were, a little bit; but, just as in Holy Communion He gives Himself whole and entire to each of us, so He died for us all in such a manner that every one may benefit by His death no less fully than if He had died for him alone. This is the law of God's love and of God's gifts, as St Thomas of Aquino very forcibly expresses it in a single line of one of his beautiful hymns on the Blessed Sacrament:

Sic totum omnibus quod totum singulis,

that is to say: "So giveth He all to all that He giveth

all to each." Yes, each of us has as much right as St Paul had to say: *Dilexit* ME *et traditit semetipsum pro* ME—"He loved *me* and gave Himself up for *me*";* each of us has as much right as St Thomas the Apostle, when our Lord showed him His sacred wounds after the Resurrection, to exclaim: "*My* Lord and *my* God!";† as much right as St Francis of Assisi to cry: "*My* God and *my* all!" In this sense, then, I may and I ought to treasure *my* crucifix, and to meditate on the mystery which it represents as my very own.

What, then, should be my thoughts, as I lovingly gaze upon my crucifix? Here are at least some of them. He who is there represented is true and very God. From Him, as my Creator, I came; through Him, as my Preserver, I live, and move, and am; before Him, as my Judge, I must surely stand. On Him I depend for every breath I draw; and even were I to raise my hand or open my lips to transgress His law, I cannot even do this sinful act, or utter this sinful word,—nay, nor so much as think a sinful thought,—without His support.

And then, secondly, He who is there represented is no less truly Man, supremely and incomparably best among all human friends, whether I recognise Him as such or no. No gift that I ever received but came ultimately from Him; no service that any one ever rendered me but was—rightly understood—His

* Gal. ii. 20. † St John xx. 28.

service. And what friend ever gave me, or did for me, more than the most infinitesimal fraction of that which I owe to Him who gave His life-blood for my salvation, who gives Himself to me—as a foretaste of good things to come—in His all-holy Sacrament, and who pledges Himself, and promises, and most ardently desires to give Himself to me in the fulness of secure possession for all eternity? No love with which any one has ever loved me, or ever can or could love me, is (if it be genuine) more than the merest spark from that furnace of divine love of which the human symbol is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced for me on the Cross; or (if it be not genuine) more than a base and painted counterfeit of that sacred fire.

We all remember how that sinful woman of the town, of whom we read in the seventh chapter of St Luke's Gospel, came in when Jesus sat at meat one day in the Pharisee's house, and — smitten with sorrow for her many sins—bathed His feet with her tears, and anointed them with her ointment, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed them again and again. Well, we too have access to the feet of Jesus, to those sacred feet, not merely, as in the days of His ministry, wearied in the search after sinners, but pierced and wounded —ah! how sorely wounded—by and for sin; by my sins and for my sins, O Jesus! And if I am so hard-hearted, so dull of apprehension, so frivolous and worldly in my habitual thoughts that I cannot

weep for my sins, at least I can be ashamed of my hard-heartedness, my dulness, my frivolity; at least I can kiss the feet of my crucifix, and cry for pardon with the loud cry of the heart, and protest with all the strength of my will that I am determined, at least for the future, to prefer Jesus crucified, the Alpha and Omega of creation, my first beginning and my last end, to all those creatures of a day whose outward attractions would draw my heart away from Him. Teach me, O Jesus! to understand something of Thy love for me, that I may at last learn to love Thee in return, not as Thou deservest, but according to the measure of my feebleness. "Too late have I known Thee, O ancient Truth; too late have I loved Thee, O first and only Fair!" So cried St Augustine, the bitterness of compunction and the sweetness of a new-found love struggling for the mastery in his heart; and we may join our voices with his. Too late have I learned to love Thee, Jesus, my heart's love! Jesus, my God and my all!

But there are higher lessons than those of contrition for sin, and of affective love to be learned from my crucifix. They are lessons which we have heard before, but which will bear repeating many times. If it be true, as it unquestionably is, that Jesus is the one Man who alone is worthy of the absolute and unreserved loyalty of our hearts, it must be also true that the one work which is

worthy of a man's absolute and unstinted self-devotion is the work which He came on earth to do, and which He consummated on the Cross. And this is the work of saving souls. For me, personally, it is the work of saving my own soul first of all, and then the souls of others in so far as it may be given to me to influence them for good. And it follows, moreover, that the one way in which this work can be carried out in high perfection is the way which He chose, the way of the Cross.

Does it perhaps seem to us that there are thoughts which lie outside of what is possible for us? Or shall we say that they are vague and unpractical? These objections will lose something of their apparent reasonableness, if we will recall to our minds the memory of one who has recently passed away from among us, and whose obituary notice may be read in the pages of *The Stonyhurst Magazine*—Father Reginald Colley, of the Society of Jesus.* Forty years ago he was a boy here in this College, as sturdy and manly in character as any who are here to-day, and with prospects in life as brilliant and full of promise as any of us could boast. But deliberately and of set purpose he turned his back on the pleasures of the world for the sake of something better. He who could have commanded the services of many became the

* Father Reginald Colley, S.J., died at Stonyhurst, February 12, 1904. R.I.P.

servant of all, for this (as those who knew him best will most gladly testify) is what he became from the first hour of his entrance into the religious life; this is what he was, more than ever, during the years of his government as Rector and Provincial. He had no thought but to carry out to the utmost the will of his Divine Master; and that will, for him, was that he should devote himself to the service of his neighbour for his Master's sake. Nor was it an easy service to which he gave himself. We have read, or we may read in our Magazine, how — many years ago — he contracted the first beginnings of the illness which at last brought him to his death, in watching by the bedside of the sick—of sick boys here within these walls. It was an illness which he would never acknowledge as a reason for desisting from labour, but which he cheerfully accepted as a means for his own sanctification, knowing well that only in and through suffering and self-denial of one kind or another could the Master's work, or that portion of it which was entrusted to him, be brought to perfection.

And so he persevered to the end, toiling to the utmost of his power even to the close of his last day here on earth. And in the night he was taken. It was a sudden, yet most assuredly not an unprovided death. For he was a man who had learned to some purpose the lessons of his crucifix.

He was a man who could have said — had it ever occurred to him to say anything that could reflect credit on himself: "Lord, I have done the work which Thou gavest me to do. *Consummatum est*— It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul."

XX.

A KINGLY PRIESTHOOD*

"But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people."—1 PET. ii. 9.

OUR improvement and progress in the service of God depends in large measure on the firmness with which we grasp, and the degree in which we make our own, the fundamental principles of the spiritual life. Two of these fundamental principles we have endeavoured, on various occasions, to bring home to ourselves, viz., that of striving in all things to conform our wills with the divine will, and that of the imitation of Christ. And now, during this paschal season, we may profitably devote some attention to a third principle, which is, in a manner, the complement of the other two, and which, to some of us, may appeal more strongly than either of them. It is the principle of union with our Lord. "I live now," says St Paul, "not I, but Christ liveth in me."†

* April 10, 1904 (Low Sunday). † Gal. ii. 20.

Our relation with our Lord is, or ought to be, a relation not merely of resemblance but of incorporation. The Church is spoken of as the Body of Christ, whereof we are the members ; she is spoken of, again, as the beloved Spouse of Christ, united to Him by a vital bond of which the union of man and wife is but a dim shadow ; and of this sponsal union, so long as we are in the state of sanctifying grace, we are all partakers, though in very different degrees according to the sort of lives we lead. And it is the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, more than anything else, by which this incorporation is effected, this sponsal union realised and brought to perfection. "As the Father liveth in me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." * And therefore we ought, all of us, to be able to say with truth, according to the measure of our grace : "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is indeed greatly to be desired that we should, as far as possible, consciously merge our lives in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even in this present life the consciousness of our union with Him is a source of deep peace, the true paschal peace, and of genuine happiness, a foretaste, though but a faint foretaste, of the happiness of heaven. It is a thought which most powerfully helps us to rise above the selfishness, the pettiness, the frivolity, to which our nature, corrupted by sin, is so prone. And it is no mere

* St John vi. 58.

fanciful thought, but God's own truth. We *are* incorporated with Christ, we *are* one with Him. He *does* live in us, and we *do* live by Him, whether we advert to the fact or no. But this union, which in substance belongs to all who are in the state of grace, can be made indefinitely stronger and closer if we recognise its existence, and strive earnestly to make the most of our high privilege. The thought of our union with Christ, the union that is and the union that ought to be, is, then, one with which we shall do well to familiarise ourselves; to the end and intent that, as we advance in years, it may become more vital and more active.

It may be regarded under many aspects, and, among others, we may think of it as giving us a share in Christ's Priesthood. Not, of course, that we can all or most of us become priests, in the more specific sense of the term; but that every one of us, even though he be, and intends to remain, a layman, has a true share in the priesthood of our Lord. It is of the whole body of the faithful that St Peter speaks when he calls those to whom his first Epistle is addressed, "a kingly (or royal) priesthood"—*regale sacerdotium*. Let us ask ourselves, then, in what sense this is true; for assuredly St Peter's words are intended to be taken seriously. The proper function of a priest as such, is to be in various ways a "mediator" between God and man, pleading man's cause with God, and likewise pleading God's cause

with his fellow-men, and helping to draw them to God, according to the measure of his gifts and opportunities. Now, no one is entitled, as it were of his own right, to exercise this mediatorial office. Even in merely human affairs, a would-be mediator must render himself and his conciliatory efforts welcome to both parties concerned. Thus, in our own time, we have repeatedly heard of particular nations or sovereigns offering their mediation in a quarrel between two other nations, and of the offer being declined, with or without thanks. Much less could any mere creature have the right to claim that God should bestow on a fellow-creature so great a gift as that of sanctifying grace, with all that it involves. It were as though a beggar should ask the king to raise a fellow-beggar to the rank of a royal duke, and to settle on him a pension of ten thousand a year—only that the comparison falls so grotesquely below the reality. But there is One who, by reason of His double nature, as true God and true Man, *is* by His own right a mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ our great High Priest. And whereas we could not have claimed, by any right of our own, to put ourselves forward as mediators between God and our fellow-men, He has chosen to associate us with Himself, and to give us all a share in His priestly office. And how? In this way. It was said, and truly said, by St Augustine, that when Peter baptises or when Paul

baptises, it is Christ Himself who baptises, their acts being adopted by Him as His own. And somewhat similarly every good action that we do, every good word that we say, every good thought that we think with the aid of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is in a sense more truly His than ours; so that, in and through us, Christ is merciful, Christ is obedient, Christ works, Christ prays, Christ suffers; in and through us, again, Christ is victorious over sin and death. We are but instruments in His hands, not after the fashion of a lifeless tool in the hands of the joiner, but rather after the fashion of the living members of a living body; as the hand may be said to be the instrument of the brain, and as its strength comes from the life-blood propelled to it and through it from the heart.

And now let us make a more special application of this truth. It has been said that the business of a priest is to mediate; and, as we know very well, the mediation of Our Great High Priest was exercised chiefly by means of His great act of sacrifice. And no otherwise is it, or ought it to be, with us. It is most strictly enjoined by the laws of the Church that beneath every altar on which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered, or in a cavity of the table of the altar itself, some relics of martyrs should be enshrined. This very ancient usage has a Scriptural basis and justification in the words of the Apocalypse: "I saw under the altar the souls of

them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held." * And it is full of a most profound and beautiful significance; for it reminds us that all the sufferings of the martyrs are fused, as it were, and made one with the sufferings of Christ, being accepted by God as a true and efficacious sacrifice; true and efficacious, precisely because thus fused and united with His. The same idea is expressed by St Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians, when he says: "I make good in my body, on behalf of the Church, what is wanting of the sufferings of Christ." † Not, of course, that the sufferings of Christ are or could be of themselves insufficient; but it has pleased God that their practical efficacy, their application to individual men, should be in a measure dependent on their being shared by His servants, and reproduced and continued, as it were, in their lives and in their deaths. We are all, to a greater or less extent, helped in our spiritual life by crucifixes of wood or metal, by the Christmas crib, the Stations of the Cross, and holy images and pictures of various kinds. But it was part of the economy of God's providence that there should be, so to say, living crucifixes as well, men in whose life and death should be reproduced the likeness of our suffering Saviour, and who should carry on through the ages that tradition of the endurance of pain for justice' sake, which had its origin long before His coming, but to

* Apoc. vi. 9. † Col. i. 24.

which He gave, by His death, a new significance and value. Thank God the age of martyrs is not past. There have been many in China, Corea, and elsewhere, within living memory, and some within the lifetime of the youngest among us; and it may well be that in no future age of the Church will there be wanting men, and women too, who shall seal with their blood their testimony to the Christian faith. And their relics too, it may be, will be laid beneath the altar of sacrifice, in token of the union of their passion with the Passion of our Lord, and of its acceptance by God as having a true sacrificial value.

But it is not the martyrs alone who offer to God an acceptable sacrifice. We may all of us have known persons who, if they have not been called to lay down their lives, have yet endured much for conscience. Converts who have sustained some very serious loss, whether of the means of livelihood, or of social position or prospects, in consequence of having embraced the Catholic faith. Parents who have deprived themselves of many comforts in order to provide for their children the blessings of a good education; or who have been willing to forego the support to which they might have looked forward in old age, in order to allow their sons or daughters to devote themselves to the service of God in the ecclesiastical state or in the religious life. These are but instances, homely and inconspicuous instances, but none the less real on that account, of the spirit of

self-sacrifice which has ever been strong in the Church of Christ.

And that same spirit of self-sacrifice is not wanting, please God, among ourselves. If the record of all our thoughts, words, and actions during the last year, or the last month, could be laid open here before us, we should read there of many an act of self-denial done for the sake of giving an alms to the poor; or, perhaps, of some painful or troublesome malady borne with much patience; of some harsh word bravely put up with, when a first impulse would have led one to "sulk" or "talk back"; of some unjust or apparently unjust treatment endured without complaint. And all these things are of the same order, though on a more modest scale, with the brave endurance of the martyrs themselves; and all of them are by virtue of the grace of God abiding in our souls, caught up in, and made one with, the great sacrifice of the King of Martyrs. Nay, even apart from such isolated and occasional examples of Christian fortitude, the life of a boy at school, provided only that his habitual motives are right and reasonable, is full of a kind of endurance for justice sake. Day by day, from the uncomfortably early hour at which he is called upon to rise until bedtime, he is constantly doing things which are more or less unpleasant; and he is doing them, it may be hoped, not simply because he lives under the fear of certain temporal and local pains and penalties, but

because he knows them to be his duty; he is doing them, it may be hoped, as well as he can, that he may please our Lord to the best of his ability. All these incidents of our daily life are reckoned and accounted to our cross; and they form—not by a kind of legal fiction, but in sober reality and truth—a modest portion of that great sum of Christian self-sacrifice which is united with the supreme sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

Therefore we have reason to be greatly encouraged; and we may, without hesitation and without presumption, offer our lives with all their little unpleasant experiences, together with all the greater trials that may yet be in store for us, for the same intentions for which our Lord offered His life on the Cross; remembering that in all that we have to endure we are bearing our own little part in a very great work, and exercising our share—even though it be but a very minute share—in the atoning priesthood of Christ. As often as we feel depressed by pain, or discouraged by disappointment or failure when we have done our best, we have our comfort in the remembrance that it is precisely such things as these that help to draw us closer to Him, and increase our participation in His endurance. It is in adversity rather than in prosperity that we have a right to say: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me."

But if we would enjoy in the fullest degree of which we are capable that close union with our

Lord which ought to be the desire of our hearts, we must not hold back from His loving invitation to receive Him as often as possible in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. The disciples at Emmaus, who had been so puzzled by the mystery of the Cross, and had been so greatly at a loss to understand the meaning of His sufferings and death, "knew Him in the breaking of bread." * And in "the breaking of bread" we too shall learn to know Him who lives in us, works in us, suffers in and with us. There we shall learn more and more fully the meaning of St Paul's words: *Mihi, vivere, Christus est*—"To me, to live is Christ."

* St Luke xxiv. 31, 35.

XXI.

LIFE IN UNION WITH CHRIST *

Mihi, vivere, Christus est—"To me, to live is Christ."—PHILIP. i. 21.

To bring, or gather up, all things—or more specifically all mankind—under the headship of Christ (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χρίστῳ); such, according to St Paul, was the purpose of the Incarnation.† And it is to renewed and united efforts for the carrying out of this purpose that our Holy Father Pope Pius X. has again and again, since his first Encyclical, exhorted all Christians, and those more especially to whom the advantages of birth, of ample means, or at least of a good education, have given or will give more than average opportunities of influencing their fellow-men. And the need of these exhortations of the Holy Father will appear the more clearly, the more we reflect on the insane hatred of Christ and His Church

* April 17, 1904 (Second Sunday after Easter).

† Eph. i. 10.

which is now being shown in France, which seems to be spreading to other countries, and which is beginning to make itself felt even here in England.

It would unquestionably make an extraordinary change in the lives of some of us, it would make a considerable change in the lives of the best and most fervent among us, if we could acquire an overmastering enthusiasm for the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, such an enthusiasm presupposes, of course, a knowledge of Him, that knowledge of Christ of which St Paul says so many wonderful things, and in trying to urge the importance of which he seems to lose himself in seeking for language that will not fall too utterly short of the thought which fills his mind and heart to overflowing. It is the only knowledge that really matters, except so far as other knowledge may throw light on this, or as its acquisition may be a part of a man's duty. "Brethren," he says, writing to the Corinthians, "I count myself to know nothing among you, save only Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." * Addressing the Philippians, he calls it "an excellent knowledge," by comparison with which he esteems all things else as mere "loss." † And yet again he writes to the Ephesians: "I bend my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," imploring Him "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. † Philip. iii. 7.

glory . . . that you may be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge; that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God."* That is to say, he prays that his Ephesian converts may know, to the utmost limit of their capacity, that which cannot be fully known, the mystery of the charity or love of Christ. Such are the words, addressed to ordinary Christians like ourselves, of one who in his own day was a man of learning and culture, but who had made the discovery that all culture, literary, artistic, or scientific, all the riches and pleasures and honours which the world has to offer, are vain and frivolous, vapid and tasteless, by comparison with this new learning that he had begun to acquire, this new love that filled his heart, this new enthusiasm which had taken possession of all his faculties, so that his whole mind, and all the energies of his strong will, were set on being one with Christ. To him, "to live is Christ," and "to die" were "gain"†; for by death he would be more closely united to his Divine Master than is possible in this life. In another place it is now no more Paul who lives, but Christ lives in Paul.‡ Elsewhere, the wounds of Paul's many scourgings are Christ's wounds. "I bear in my body," he says, "the wounds

* Eph. iii. 14-19. † Philip. i. 21. ‡ Gal. ii. 20.

(*stigmata*) of the Lord Jesus"*; yet again his sufferings and those of his flock are one with the sufferings of Christ: *Semper mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro circumferentes*†; nay, he even tells us, in what is perhaps the most remarkable passage of all, that he makes good, in his own body, on behalf of the Church, what is wanting of the sufferings of Christ.‡ Again, he "glories" in the cross of Christ, and in his own share in that cross§; the folly of the cross (as the world esteems it) is to him the deepest wisdom‖; the shame of the cross is the highest honour¶; the pain of the cross only helps to deepen in his heart the joy of union with his crucified Saviour: *Christo confixus sum cruci.***

So it has ever been with the saints: from Ignatius of Antioch to Ignatius of Loyola, and even down to our own day. The story of the holy bishop of Antioch should be familiar to us all. Sent under guard to Rome, that he might be cast to the beasts in the amphitheatre, he wrote to beg the faithful to take no steps to hinder his martyrdom. "I know what is good for me," he says: "now I begin to be a disciple." Jesus, his Master, had been crucified; and that Divine Master he would resemble as closely as possible. Still more familiar is the story of the

* Gal. vi. 17.
† 2 Cor. iv. 10.
‡ Col. i. 24.
§ Gal. vi. 14; *cf.* Rom. v. 8.
‖ 1 Cor. i. 24, 25.
¶ *Cf.* Heb. xiii. 13.
** Gal. ii. 19.

stigmata of St Francis of Assisi, the reward of his great and tender love for Jesus crucified: and we all know how St Ignatius Loyola held it to be the highest object of human ambition to wear the livery of Christ, and to share the labours and sufferings of Christ, that thereby a man might the more perfectly carry out the work of Christ.

Now, some degree at least of this enthusiasm for our Lord, of this ardent personal attachment and loyalty to Him, is within the reach of all of us. But it presupposes, as has been said, a more or less intimate knowledge of Him; some tincture of that "excellent knowledge" concerning which St Paul has so much to say. How, then, are we to attain to this knowledge? One part of the business is, of course, to make ourselves familiar with the record of His life, His words, acts, and sufferings, which is preserved for us in the Gospels; and this is a subject which requires much more serious attention than we are, sometimes, willing to give to it. We have to remember, however, that mere reading is not enough for the purpose which we have in view, unless we turn over in our minds what we read, making it in some degree, at least, a subject of meditation and reflection, lest the seed of the word be found to have fallen on barren soil. Nor, again, are we to trust to our own reading and reflections alone. Holy Scripture is not left to the private interpretation of every individual, but is the charter of the living

Church, to be interpreted by her living voice. And even apart from her dogmatic decisions, it is an essential feature of the life of the Church that religious instruction should be orally imparted and received in a spirit of reasonable docility. Not, of course, that we are bound to accept blindly everything that every preacher or teacher tells us, but that we are to be ready to learn, ready to put the best construction on what our teachers say, ready to believe —unless we have clear proof to the contrary—that they are faithfully handing on to us the traditional doctrine of the Catholic Church. We should be to some extent cutting ourselves off from one of the appointed means of attaining to a knowledge of our Lord, if, under our present circumstances, we were to make light of religious instruction in any of its forms; or if, in our after lives, we were to neglect the hearing of the Word of God.

But it is even more important to remember that we cannot hope to make any great progress in the genuine knowledge of our Lord, unless we are careful to act in accordance with the knowledge which we already possess.[1] When we are trying to master a language, for instance, or when we are studying mathematics, we know very well that, after we have learnt a rule, it is necessary to go through the drudgery of certain exercises in the application of the rule; and if we sat for years under the most learned professors in Europe, we should make no

considerable advance in any branch of learning without such exercises in some shape or form. And so it is that we cannot hope to know and understand our Lord better than we do, unless we make a serious effort to put in practice the knowledge which we have gained hitherto. The value of knowledge in spiritual matters does not lie in the satisfaction of a merely intellectual curiosity. Such knowledge is valuable only as it affects the will, either as moving it to internal acts of faith, hope, charity, and the like, or as stimulating and guiding it in the matter of external conduct. We want to know our Lord that we may be like Him; that we may learn to live His life.

Now there is one thing, at least, that we all of us know about our Blessed Lord; and it is a characteristic that is forcibly brought before us by the Gospel of this second Sunday after Easter, the Gospel of the Good Shepherd. In a general way, even without having made a close study of the Gospels, we all know something of His great mercy, of His unfailing gentleness to such as approached Him in a humble spirit, of His tender consideration for the feelings of others. And if we were to propose to ourselves to put this one little bit of knowledge into practice, we should be taking a very good means to make either a first step, or a further step than we have yet made, in what may be called the practical knowledge of our Lord.

Mercy, kindness, consideration for others. A

thoughtless selfishness is the mark of the spoiled child; kindness and consideration for others is a sign that a boy's character is forming, and that he gives promise of becoming what a Christian gentleman, whether wealthy or otherwise, should be. Some people remain selfish, and to that extent childish, all their lives, the only advance in this matter being from a thoughtless to an arrogant and overbearing kind of selfishness. Or they are selfish and generous by turns. Or again, they are habitually selfish, and generous only when some very strong and direct appeal is made to their feelings. But it is plainly desirable that we should learn to be consistently and systematically kind and considerate. And the question is, how? Under our present circumstances we have not many opportunities for the practice of what are commonly known as the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. We do not, while we are at school, come into personal contact with the poor and the distressed; and the most we can do for them is by way of an occasional alms, and by being very carefully on our guard against an overbearing manner towards servants. Among our own companions, however, and towards the other inmates of this house, we may have many opportunities of exercising, if not mercy, at any rate kindness and consideration, at least on a small scale. For instance, not only by never allowing ourselves to bully another, or to ridicule those who may seem to be less gifted than ourselves, but by manfully taking the

part of any one who may perchance be bullied or ridiculed by others; or again, by showing a pleasant manner to any one who may for the moment be a little unpopular and out of favour with his companions. If our Blessed Lord could appear in our playground some day, it is quite certain that He would have a kind word for every one. But we may also feel sure that He would find opportunities of being especially kind to any one who might be suffering from that sort of loneliness and depression which sometimes grievously afflicts boys when they find that for some reason or another they do not "get on well" (as the saying is) with their schoolfellows.

There is, moreover, another department of our lives in which occasions may frequently offer themselves of showing kindness to others, and of abstaining from all that is the very opposite of kindness. We sometimes excuse our misconduct at school on the ground that school rules do not bind under sin; that they are a mere affair of penal discipline which we are at liberty to transgress, taking our chance of the penalty. Now it is, of course, perfectly true that school rules, as such, do not bind under sin. But it is no mere penal regulation of college life, it is a principle laid down by our Lord Himself, that we should "do as we would be done by," that we should do to others as we should wish them to act towards us; and it is a principle which we ought to apply in our dealings with those who are placed in authority over us. The

law of charity extends to all men, whatever their position, or their official relations to ourselves, may be; and it may be that we should sometimes feel more easy in our conscience, and more at one with our Lord, if we were a little more careful not to give unnecessary annoyance to those under whose charge we live; if we were to extend to them, as to our fellow-men and fellow-Christians, a little more of that respect and consideration which is due to every one without exception. This is a point which each of us may profitably consider for himself.

To sum up. We wish to know our Lord better, that we may love Him more; that we may imitate Him more closely; that we may be more at one with Him in the whole course and conduct of our lives. If this desire is genuine, then we must take the best means that are available for the acquisition of this knowledge. And the means which have been suggested are:—first, the devout reading of the Gospels; secondly, attention to religious instruction, wherever and by whomsoever given; and thirdly, the earnest effort to act in accordance with what we already know about our Divine Master, particularly as regards the exercise of charity to all men alike, whether they be our inferiors, our equals, or our superiors.

XXII.

JOHN HENRY, CARDINAL NEWMAN *

"Let us now praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation; . . . men of great power and endowed with wisdom, . . . and by the strength of wisdom instructing the people in most holy words."—ECCLUS. xliv. 1, 3, 4.

WHEN our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, said to His disciples: "Ye are the salt of the earth . . . Ye are the light of the world,"† it is plain that the significance of His words extended far beyond the circle of His actual hearers. They had their verification primarily, of course, in the twelve Apostles; and they have been verified also in the successors of the Apostles throughout the history of the Church. But they have also a wider application to the Church at large, to the whole body of the faithful, as a chosen people whose mission it is to enlighten and to purify a world that knows not God or knows Him not aright. And they have, in particular, an application

* Sunday, May 1, 1904. † St Matt. v. 13, 14.

to ourselves. For each of us is called, in his own small measure, to be a light in the world, and the salt of the earth. Each of us, whatever his station in life may be, has a mission from God; there is some work, on behalf of the kingdom of God, which God Himself wants him to do; some work for which the occasions and the opportunities will present themselves in the years to come; a work which will be done if he is thoroughly in earnest, and if he is faithful to the graces that are given him; a work that will be left undone if he is unfaithful to these graces, or slack and remiss in his efforts.

Now, among the helps and encouragements to earnestness in our own lives which are within our reach, and of which we ought to avail ourselves, must be reckoned some knowledge of the lives and of the work of men distinguished for their ability and their zeal in God's cause who have gone before us, more particularly here in our own country, "our fathers in their generation; . . . men of power and endowed with wisdom"; for, even though their immediate surroundings may have been very different from ours, their mission was primarily to that English or English-speaking world in the midst of which we too, for the most part, shall have to live; and there are always lessons to be learned from their career, their virtues, their actions, or — it may be — their writings.

Pre-eminent among the distinguished English

Catholics of a generation that has but recently passed away was, it need hardly be said, John Henry, Cardinal Newman; and the recent publication of a biographical sketch of Newman, by Dr William Barry, seems to afford a suitable occasion for some reflections on the life of that truly great man.*

If one might sum up the whole influence of Newman in a single phrase—which must be understood, however, as a general statement, not as a universal proposition—it may be said that it was his special mission to wake up his countrymen, Anglicans in the first instance, but Catholics also, either from a deep and heavy slumber, or better still, to the recognition or adoption of ideals and possibilities heretofore unthought of, or at least forgotten. To rouse men to wakefulness and compel their attention—attention not to himself but to the truth which it was his to utter; to set men thinking and to bring home to them the supreme importance of thinking aright on religious questions, in view of the infinite momentousness of the issues involved; this may be said to have been Newman's specific work, rather than in any direct way to stir men to action, or again, to make any considerable or permanent addition to

* The remainder of this discourse is given (with slight modifications) in the expanded form in which it appeared as an article in *The Tablet* of May 28, 1904. For the necessary permission I have to thank the courtesy of the Editor.

the sum of human knowledge. It is true, of course, that the religious problems which we, as Catholics, have to face, are not identical with those which confront Anglicans, Nonconformists, Agnostics, but they are closely allied. For us, all such problems reduce themselves to these, viz., (1) how to render the truths of faith acceptable to those who have not yet attained to them; and (2) how to fortify in their possession those to whom they belong, whether by inheritance or by acquisition, ourselves included.

All the world knows something of the intellectual and moral stagnation which prevailed at Oxford during the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth; and Dr Barry illustrates the topic by two apt quotations. "The fellows . . . of my time," writes Gibbon, "were decent, easy men, who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the Founder; their days were filled by a series of uniform employments, the chapel and the hall, the coffee-house and the common-room, till they retired, weary and well-satisfied, to a long slumber. From the toil of reading, or thinking, or writing, they had absolved their conscience, and . . . their conversation stagnated in a round of college business, Tory politics, personal anecdotes, and private scandal." * "The academical institutions of some parts of Europe," wrote Dugald Stewart, alluding to the English Universities, "are not without their use to

* Barry, pp. 1, 2.

the historian of the human mind. Immovably moored to the same station by the strength of their cables and the weight of their anchors, they enable him to measure the rapidity of the current by which the rest of mankind is borne along." * Or, if it be alleged that the allowance to be made for the retrospective exaggerations of the autobiographer, and for the somewhat ponderous humour of the philosophic satirist, deprive these depreciatory descriptions of any serious weight, it is, at least, not too much to say that the Oxford Anglicanism of those days was a form of religion decorous without zeal, as respectable as that of the Pharisees, and as serenely self-complacent. Such, or something like this, though its members were already growing uneasy, was the Oxford to which Newman, then a boy in his teens, bent his steps a couple of years after the battle of Waterloo. In the course of eight-and-twenty years, Oxford had become the scene of the most remarkable religious movement of the century; a movement of which the force is not yet spent; a movement of which, in Dr Barry's phrase, Newman was both "the protagonist and the choragus," the chief actor in the drama, and its ablest commentator.

What, then, had he done? He had, in the first place, startled men out of their somnolent self-content, and had forced them at least to recognise the fact

* Barry, p. 39.

that there were vital questions urgently pressing for an answer. "Truth," he declared in the first of his *University Sermons*, preached in 1826—"Truth is too sacred and religious a thing to be sacrificed to the mere gratification of the fancy, or amusement of the mind, or party spirit, or the prejudices of education, or attachment—however amiable—to the opinion of human teachers."* He had awakened them, in the second place, to the characteristic and distinctive feature of the Christian religion, as being no mere humdrum system, however respectable, of theistic ethics or ethical theism, but as the personal worship and love of Him "in whose life we are allowed to discern the attributes of the invisible God drawn out into action," or, in other words, translated into the language of human life, "in accommodation to our weakness": a theme which we find already handled in the second University Sermon, and which was afterwards to be so magnificently handled in the closing sections of the *Grammar of Assent*.† Thirdly he had, by means of a multitude of writings and literary enterprises, drawn attention to the necessity for the careful and sympathetic study of ecclesiastical history and tradition, as an indispensable means towards the elucidation of points in controversy. And lastly, in an epoch-making treatise he had shown that, in the principle of "doctrinal

* *University Sermons* (Ed. 1844), p. 8.
† *University Sermons*, pp. 23 ff.

development," checked and guided by an ever-living authority, was to be found the true key to that history, the true synthesis wherein the alleged differences between the claims of a teaching Church and the claims of the human mind must find their ultimate reconciliation. And having delivered and compelled attention to this fourfold message, he quitted Oxford for ever, leaving his ideas to germinate and fructify, there if it might so be, elsewhere if Oxford should prove unresponsive; and not omitting, on his departure, to sound a note of warning.

"Such were the thoughts," he writes, in the valedictory paragraph with which he concludes the *Essay on Development*—"Such were the thoughts concerning the 'Blessed Vision of Peace,' of one whose long-continued petition had been that the Most Merciful would not despise the work of His own Hands, nor leave him to himself; while yet his eyes were dim, and his breast laden, and he could but employ Reason in the things of Faith. And now, dear reader, time is short, eternity is long. Put not from you what you have here found; regard it not as mere matter of present controversy; set not out resolved to refute it, and looking about for the best way of doing so; seduce not yourself with the imagination that it comes of disappointment, or disgust, or restlessness, or wounded feeling, or undue sensibility, or other weakness. Wrap not

yourself round in the associations of years past; nor determine that to be truth which you wish to be so, nor make an idol of cherished anticipations. Time is short, eternity is long.

> Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine,
> Secundum vestrum tuum in pace:
> Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum.*

And then, having found peace in the one true Church, he wakened up English Catholics in their turn; first by his *Lectures on the Scope and Office of a University* and kindred works, to higher ideals of education which, though not fully operative at the time, are bearing fruit in our day; then by his *Sermons* and *Discourses*, and among them by his historic sermon on "The Second Spring," to new hopes and a new sense of the resources that were within the reach of priests and people alike; next by his *Apologia* to a better understanding of what the trials of a mind might be, and to a more sympathetic attitude and a larger charity towards our separated brethren; thereafter by his *Grammar of Assent* to a more human and less pedantic conception of philosophy than had hitherto prevailed in many quarters, and incidentally to a truer sense of the real scope of religious controversy, its limitations and its possibilities; by his *Dream of Gerontius* and

* *Essay on Development* (Ed. 1846), p. 453; Barry, pp. 84, 58.

his *Callista* to a fresh appreciation of the beauty of Catholic dogma, and, be it added, of Catholic morality; and lastly, by his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* (in reply to Mr Gladstone's ill-judged *Expostulation*) to a more accurate conception of the relation, in practical matters, between the authority of the Church and the indefeasible rights of the individual conscience.

Not that he can be said, whether as an Anglican or as a Catholic, to have awakened the crowd, or to have gained the attention of "the man in the street," to whom indeed—except on rare occasions—he did not address himself. His message, as Dr Barry very truly writes, was "to the master rather than to the novice." And even to "the master" he may be said to have spoken, as has been already indicated, rather by way of the suggestion of new methods than by the communication of fresh knowledge. Or again, perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that the philosophical and controversial methods which he adopted, "though novel as regarded the immediate past," were in substance "identical with those by which Clement, Origen, Basil, and the early Fathers had directed their course." And this, not from any disposition to underestimate the labours of later theologians, but because—as Dr Barry points out—"Newman realised, as others did not, that Christianity was falling away from the public order; that Christians would be called upon more and more to . . . mix

in a society no longer Catholic or Protestant, but free-thinking as was the later Roman Empire, sceptical yet superstitious, corrupt yet polished; and he began to provide against the evil day. . . . Newman was alive to the signs of the times; he read and gave them a meaning. Events have shown that he was not deceived." *

Each of the characteristic writings, or groups of writings, which were enumerated just now, came as a kind of self-revelation, bringing to light some new phase of the author's character or personality, some power hitherto unsuspected even in so great a man. But to say all this is no more than to touch lightly on the surface of things. What was the inner secret of these various manifestations of power, a power not at all political, not mainly social, not merely literary or purely intellectual, but in the highest and widest sense moral and religious, a power over the hearts of men, touching them to the finest and noblest issues? It may be found, perhaps, in the combination of an intense individualism with an intense reverence, of an intense self-consciousness, held in solution—so to say—in an all-absorbing sense of the divine presence and of the absolute dominion of God over the soul. But, as giving fuller scope to these fundamental dispositions, the successive circumstances of his life, so visibly and conspicuously full of severe mental and moral trials, must assuredly

* Barry, pp. 114, 115.

be reckoned as contributory to the general result.

We may consider first what has been called his individualism, and his sense of utter and absolute dependence on God. "To every one of us," he said, "there are but two beings in the whole world, himself and God"; and these words deserve to be taken as no mere incidental expression, called forth by the emotions of the moment, but as giving the very key to his character and to the whole temper of his mind. To seek God's will step by step through the rugged pathway of his life was his constant and unflagging determination, so beautifully because so humbly expressed in the best known of all his poems; from which, notwithstanding its familiarity, it may yet be lawful to quote:—

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home—
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.

. . . . . .

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone.

To do God's will always and in all things was for him the supreme end of human action, to find God's

truth, the supreme end of all human enquiry, God's judgment was the supreme test of conduct, and the individual conscience the final court of appeal in which God's judgment was to be ascertained, so far as it can be ascertained in this present life. "The rule and measure of duty," he writes, "is not utility, nor expedience, nor State convenience, nor fitness, order, and the *pulchrum*. Conscience is not a long-sighted selfishness, nor a desire to be consistent with oneself; but it is a messenger from Him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by His representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas, and, even though the eternal priesthood throughout the Church could cease to be, in it the sacerdotal principle would remain and would have a sway." *

These words, of course, must be read as they were written, in relation to the sound Catholic notion of conscience, and not—so Newman himself warns us—as though they were applicable to that essentially false notion of conscience as "the right" which men arrogate to themselves "of thinking, speaking, writing, and acting, according to their judgment or their humour, without any thought of God at all." † Nor

* *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, pp. 56, 57.
† *Ibid.*, p. 58.

are those same words to be so understood, or misunderstood, as though their author, in his zeal for the rights of the individual self, had been forgetful of the claims of others, superiors, equals, or inferiors; or as though he had overlooked the ineradically social nature of man, the necessary dependence of the individual on the collective labour of his fellows for the intellectual furniture of his mind, and even in great measure for the colour of his moral judgments; or the inevitably hierarchical constitution of society, and in particular of the Church. All these things were God's ordinance, the holders of authority were God's vicegerents, "there could scarcely be faith, unless there were a Communion of Saints";* God speaks to each one of us "by divers parts and in many ways" through patriarchs and prophets, apostles and evangelists, Popes and Councils, through saints and sinners, through history, through the facts and the laws of nature, observed or recorded, through literature and art,—nay, through the most trivial circumstances of our daily lives; and it is part of our duty, or at least an indispensable means to our perfection, to be ever listening for His voice, conveyed to us by any or all of these means, ever watchful for the traces of His presence and for indications of His will. Nevertheless, it remains true that, even in His clearest and most explicit utterances, God speaks to us from behind a veil. To Newman, as to

* Barry, p. 157.

Clement of Alexandria and Origen: "Nature was a parable, Scripture was an allegory,"—that is to say, however strictly historical any portion of it might be, the whole was full of mystic significance of which the material facts were but the outward symbol—"pagan literature, philosophy, and mythology, rightly understood" (I am using his own words) "were but a preparation for the Gospel. The Greek poets and sages were in a certain sense prophets; for 'thoughts beyond their thought to those high bards were given.' There had been a directly divine dispensation granted to the Jews; but there had been in some sense a dispensation carried on in favour of the Gentiles. . . . In the fulness of time both Judaism and Paganism had come to nought. . . . And thus room was made for the anticipation of further and deeper disclosures, of truths still under the veil of the letter, and in their season to be revealed. The visible world still remains without its interpretation; Holy Church, in her sacraments and her hierarchical appointments, will remain, even to the end of the world, after all but a symbol of those heavenly facts which fill eternity. Her mysteries are but the expression in human language of truths to which the human mind is unequal." * Our Lord spoke to the multitudes in parables, cryptic utterances of which the meaning does not lie on the surface, but may be apprehended, in greater or less measure, by the attentive mind, pro-

* *Apologia* (Ed. 1864), pp. 89, 90; Barry, pp. 43, 44.

vided the heart be rightly disposed. To Newman all God's words to man, through Revelation, through ecclesiastical authority, through nature, through history, through personal experience, have this parabolical, mystical, symbolic character. And for this very reason (among others) their apprehension by different minds, even among men of good will, varies to an extent that we shall never realise till the hour when the secrets of hearts shall be revealed in the clear light of God's day.

And here may be found the connecting link between Newman's keen and abiding sense of personal responsibility on the one hand, and on the other hand his all-pervading mysticism. As the schoolmen put it: *Quidquid recipitur, ad modum recipientis recipitur.* Or, as we may say, every divine message, through whatever medium it may be delivered, attains its goal, if it ever does attain it, in the individual conscience; and it must there find its response. Moreover, it reaches the conscience of no two men in precisely the same form, or clad with the same vesture of implications and connotations. *Ad modum recipientis recipitur.* All this is in some sense a truism; yet who can read the words of Newman, and they are many, on topics such as these, without at least beginning to see that it is a truism the bearing of which is apt to be very imperfectly apprehended? * To make but one application of what has

* *Cf.* Barry, pp. 180 ff.

been said, it may be observed that, while his deep sense of personal responsibility made Newman severe in self-judgment, it taught him also a wise large-heartedness and a delicate tenderness in judging others, or rather, in making the most generous allowance for what might seem to be their slowness in following where he had shown the way.

"The word of God," we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, yea of the joints and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." * Such is the word of God; and the words of all those great Christian teachers through whom God has spoken have had something of this soul-piercing and heart-reaching quality. Soul-piercing and heart-searching in very truth were the words of John Henry Newman; and it was because, with so keen a sense of the manifold possibilities of self-illusion, he had so diligently searched his own heart, because with so sensitive a loyalty to conscience, he had struggled upwards, in his own phrase, *ex umbris et imaginibus ad veritatem*, from unsubstantial shadows to the solid reality of truth, that he was able to appeal with such force to the hearts of other men. In the words of his own motto: *Cor ad cor loquitur*—"Heart speaketh unto heart," in well-nigh every page of his writings.

* Heb. iv. 12.

"O loving friends," he says in the last of his Oxford sermons—entitled "The Parting of Friends,"—"O loving friends, should you know any one whose lot it has been, by writing or by word of mouth, in some degree to help you; . . . if he has ever told you what you knew about yourselves, or what you did not know; has read to you your wants or feelings, and comforted you by the very reading; has made you feel that there was a higher life than this daily one, and a brighter world than that you see; or encouraged you, or sobered you, or opened a way to the enquiring, or soothed the perplexed; . . . remember such a one in time to come, though you hear him not, and pray for him, that in all things he may know God's will, and at all times he may be ready to fulfil it."*

And here it may be well to take note of another quality of his mind and work, or rather, on another aspect of the same quality. Under the obsession, so to say, of this deep sense of personal and individual responsibility, and penetrated through and through with the conviction that the human heart cannot be carried by assault, but must be won—if won at all—by words which may serve at once to awaken some sense of spiritual need, and to satisfy that need or point the way to its satisfaction; that the needs and the capacities of each individual are *sui generis;* that true μετάνοια, the all-important change of heart or will, is the outcome and issue not of dry logical

* *Sermons on Subjects of the Day* (Ed. 1879), p. 409.

demonstration but of the concurrence with conscious reasoning of a multitude of minute and, for the most part, subconscious impressions, it became a part of his nature to expend infinite pains on the shaping of his every public utterance whether oral or written. And this, be it remembered, not in any spirit of dilettante curiosity, but by reason of that "trembling devotion to truth, sensitive as a lover's passion" (the words are Dr Barry's), which made him solicitous lest the divine message which he had to convey should suffer loss by the omission of a helpful illustration, or should be overweighted by the intrusion of a superfluous word.

But the secret of Newman's power lay, after all, not exclusively, as has been already suggested, in those fundamental and characteristic dispositions which have been here most inadequately set forth. We cannot dissociate the man from the circumstances, the pathetic circumstances of his life. *Cor ad cor loquitur* — "The heart speaketh to the heart": and it was, in great measure at least, because his own heart had been so deeply pierced and wounded, that his words had—and still have—such a power to pierce the hearts of other men. To say that Newman, as a Catholic, was—notwithstanding the conspicuous triumphs of the *Apologia*, and of the reply to Mr Gladstone — too long and too often neglected, misunderstood, misjudged, his motives misconstrued, his loyalty doubted, his orthodoxy suspected, and

his choicest schemes thwarted; and that when at last in 1879 that enlightened and far-seeing Pontiff, Leo XIII., raised him to the dignity of a Cardinal, the honour came only in time to soothe and comfort him in extreme old age; and then to sum up the facts under the rubric of "a sad and mournful history":—this were to take a very superficial view of the case, which is, it need hardly be said, not that of Dr Barry; it were to rest *in umbris et imaginibus*, instead of striving to penetrate to the inmost core of truth. The motives of those who misjudged or even thwarted Newman (if we confine our attention to those who were most highly placed) were above suspicion; the conflicts and misunderstandings which arose were largely the outcome of congenital differences of temperament; and it is at least possible that the schemes even of a Newman may have been sometimes premature. But what seems altogether beyond dispute is this, that Newman's many disappointments, instead of rendering him (as humanly speaking they might have been expected to render him) an embittered man, served on the contrary to mature and sweeten his disposition. They served to draw him nearer to the source of all true strength and guidance, and to give to his words a force which they never could have had if they had been the utterances of a man enjoying the "garish day" of prosperity. They helped to draw him, and they helped him to help in drawing others, *ex umbris*

et imaginibus ad veritatem, from shadowy phantoms to the solid reality of God's truth. For God's truth, so far as it is attainable in this life, lies not only in the apprehension of revealed dogma, but in the inmost peace of the heart.

XXIII.

OUR SELF-DEDICATION TO MARY*

"My son, keep the commandments of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them to thy heart continually, and put them about thy neck. When thou walkest let them go with thee; when thou sleepest let them keep thee; and when thou wakest they shall speak to thee. Because the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life."—PROV. vi. 20-23.

THE month of May, the month specially dedicated to our Lady, is drawing to its close; and we may well take stock, as it were, of the spiritual benefits which we have derived from it. And this, not only that we may express to her our regrets at not having made a better use of the graces that have been offered to us during these weeks past, but also that we may form practical and definite resolutions in order, as far as possible, to render permanent any advantages which we have gained. For the month of May, like a retreat, or the holy season of Lent, or any other time of special devotion, ought always

* May 29, 1904 (Trinity Sunday).

to be regarded, not as the end, but as the beginning of good things; not as a period of exceptional effort which we may forthwith relax as soon as it is over, but rather as one in which we have been gathering strength, and perhaps a little wisdom, for the succeeding stages of our life's pilgrimage.

Let us, then, carry back our memories to the very beginning of the month, and rehearse in our minds the prayer of self-dedication which we then recited together, and which we certainly do not wish to withdraw now. This will help us the better to measure our deficiencies,—those deficiencies which must surely come to light when we compare our promise with our performance,—and the more clearly to see the practical bearing of that self-dedication on our daily lives.

"My Queen and my Mother," thus we began our prayer, acknowledging her as our sovereign Lady, to whom we owe the deepest reverence and the most whole-hearted allegiance, and greeting her as our Mother to whom we owe ungrudging tribute of a most tender love, a most perfect obedience, and the most absolute confidence. "My Queen and my Mother," we said, "to thee I offer myself without any reserve." These words, if we seriously reflect upon them, mean a great deal. "To thee I offer myself without any reserve." We could not say that to any man or woman living. An officer in the Army or Navy, a clerk in an office, a priest or a

member of a religious order, all these in their several ways voluntarily undertake and thereafter owe a very loyal submission to their lawful superiors; but we do not offer ourselves "without reserve" to the Commander-in-Chief (who, by the way, has recently ceased to exist in England), or to the head of the firm, or to the Bishop, or even to the King or the Pope. For all legitimate service, according to the terms of our engagement or profession, yes; but "without reserve," certainly not. But with our Lady we make no terms, we profess to fence round our obedience with no stipulations; we do not article ourselves for a terminable period, or bargain for so many "days off" during the year, or so many hours of free time during the day: the words "without reserve" exclude all such limitations. To-day, to-morrow, and the day after, nay, for all my life, I offer myself to thee "without reserve."

Now let us consider a little more closely, let us "ponder in our heart," after the example of our Queen and our Mother, what this implies. What should we think of a boy who offered a companion a piece of cake and then was offended because the other accepted his offer; or who, after making the offer, turned aside so as not to hear the words of acceptance, "Yes, please"? We know very well what we should think and say of him. We should say, with that frankness of speech which is the privilege of youth, that he was "a humbug." Well,

now, suppose our Lady were to say: "Yes, please," to your unreserved offer. Suppose she were to say to you: "My Son wants you," "the Lord hath need of you," as we read in the Gospels that He once "had need" of the ass that carried Him into Jerusalem. Or, if we prefer a more dignified example, as He said to Peter and Andrew and James and John by the lake side, or to Matthew at the receipt of custom, "Come, follow Me," "and forthwith leaving all things they followed Him."

In one sense it is true, of course, that our Lord has need of us all. He has work for us all to do whatever our profession may be, from sweeping a crossing up to the command of the Channel Fleet. But there may be question of that more special call for our services which is commonly called a vocation. Suppose, then, that our Lady were to say to one of us that in this sense her Son wants him, that in this sense the Lord hath need of him. "Oh!" we may perhaps be tempted to exclaim, "but I hope she won't say that; and anyway I did not hear her say that." Well, of course, our Lady does not speak to us in words that can be heard with the ear; but if we really want to know what she would like us to do, we must "consider in our heart" how we, each one of us individually, can best serve her Son; for to serve her Son, according to the measure of our gifts, and in our various walks of life, whatever they may be, is unquestionably what

she would wish us all to do. And most of all, of course, if we have not already decided the matter, she would have us to make a wise choice, pondering the motives for and against each alternative that presents itself, writing them down for the sake of definiteness and a clear view, taking advice when advice is needed, and above all, praying very earnestly that we may be guided to a right decision. All this seems a logical conclusion, and a very practical conclusion from these words, which it may be assumed that we do not wish to take back: "My Queen and my Mother! to thee I offer myself without any reserve."

And then we went on to say: "And to give thee a mark of my devotion I consecrate to thee during this day, my eyes, my ears, my mouth, and my whole person": an offering in detail of what we have already offered in general; an offering to be daily renewed of that which we had already implicitly offered for the whole course of our lives.

We dedicated to her our eyes. Now, if this was something more than a mere form of words, it meant in the first place that we resolved to refrain from using our eyes in any way that would displease her Son. This is so clear as to need no explanation, beyond a general warning as to the necessity, on the one hand, of keeping a guard over our senses, and on the other hand, of avoiding an over-anxious scrupulosity in this delicate matter. It is for each

one of us to regret any unfaithfulness of which he may have been guilty in the past, and to renew his resolution for the future. But the words of our prayer may fairly be taken to express something more than a determination to keep our eyes from sinful abuse. The dedication of our eyes to Mary surely meant that we intended to use them as she would wish us to use them, viz., for the purpose of our various duties during the day, whether study, or games, or legitimate occupations of whatever kind. For instance—to take only a simple and very simple illustration—we do not quite live up to the spirit of our dedication if, when we ought to be "minding our book" (as our grandmothers would have said), we are, instead, admiring the view, such a view as can be had from, or in, our place in the school-room, or even in the church or chapel.

So, too, of our ears. When we dedicated them to Mary, our Queen and our Mother, it is to be hoped that our intention was not merely to refrain from listening to undesirable talk of whatever kind, but also to use our ears to some good purpose. It is no small thing to be a good listener. Sometimes, perhaps, we may be inclined to think that this or that lesson or instruction, in whatever subject, is not quite up to the level of our superior intelligence, and that we shall be more profitably engaged in listening to the running commentary (sometimes a little wide of the mark) of a congenial companion or too

voluble neighbour. Here is an opportunity for an act of self-denial in the spirit of our dedication.

It is unnecessary to pursue the subject by giving similar illustrations of the right and the wrong use of the tongue, though this is indeed at all times a fruitful and profitable topic for consideration. But it may be well to remind ourselves that this separate or distinct hallowing of the various sense of the body is no mere futile fancy, but is in entire accordance with the spirit of the Church. For she, when we are in danger of death, bids her ministers anoint our eyes, our ears, and our mouth, our hands and feet, praying at each anointing that we may have forgiveness of all the sins we may have committed by each of these several organs of perception or of action.

But does it perhaps seem strange that so much stress should be laid on matters which may be deemed to be of trifling importance? Well, there are many things in life that at first sight appear strange, yet turn out to have their good reasons. And there are several reasons for insisting on these matters. First of all, whereas the greatest events in history, the most splendid exploits, the most renowned victories, the most magnificent pageants, are really in God's sight of just no importance at all, except so far as they relate to Him and affect the spread of His kingdom on earth; so, on the other hand, nothing is really and truly of small importance that does relate to His service, as do all these

apparently trifling details of conduct. Then, again, it is for the most part only in these small affairs that in our present condition of life we are left to ourselves; and therefore it is on these that our self-training—which is the most important part of our education—very largely depends. Moreover, although the things in question are indeed trifles by comparison with the immense importance of keeping our souls free from mortal sin, yet the connection between the two may perhaps be closer than we sometimes think. Again and again we need the warning that one who habitually obeys the whim or fancy or sudden impulse of the moment in small things is not so likely as he might otherwise be to stand firm when he is confronted with some serious temptation. *Qui spernit modica paulatim decidet*—"He that contemneth small things," says the Wise Man, "shall fall by little and little."* And on the other hand, one who has learned to keep himself well in hand in these lesser matters will plainly be more likely to exercise self-control on some occasion when self-control is of vital importance. And lastly, the habit of petty unruliness and frivolity necessarily stands more or less in the way of that kind of serious thought, of that habit of watching or listening for the voice of conscience, which it is so important for us all to acquire. You can't hear a whisper if a great noise is going on. And the excitement and turmoil of

* Ecclus. xix. 1.

mind which is more or less incident to all that sort of conduct which can be classed as misbehaviour, unquestionably deafens our spiritual ear to the Voice of God within us. This is only one example of the many-sided truth that: *Fascinatio nugacitatis obscurat bona*—"The bewitchment of trifling hides from us what is for our good." *

So, then, as we make our daily offering of all our actions to God, and as most of our actions are in themselves on a small scale, we ought not to grudge the effort that may be needed to make these small actions worthy of His acceptance. And as we have dedicated the senses of our body as well as the faculties of our soul to our Blessed Lady, we ought to satisfy ourselves that we have not made this dedication with our lips only, but that we ratify it by a genuine effort not only to keep our senses from sin, but to employ them diligently in the service of her divine Son. "My son, keep the commandments of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

* Wisd. iv. 12.

XXIV.

THE GREAT SUPPER*

"A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse."—ST LUKE xiv. 16-18.

BY the "great supper" in the parable which is read in to-day's Gospel, is to be understood that whole provision of graces and blessings which was set before mankind through the Incarnation of the Son of God, a provision of graces and blessings which is but a foretaste of that "marriage-feast of the Lamb" (as it is called in the Apocalypse),† to which we hope, all of us, to sit down one day in the kingdom of the Father. But the parable of the Great Supper has a special reference or application to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and it is under this aspect that we may most appropriately consider it on this Sunday within the octave of Corpus Christi.

* June 5, 1904 (Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi).
† Apoc. xix. 7, 9.

This sacrament of love does, indeed, deserve to be called a Great Supper. By how many titles great! 1. It is great, in the first place, by reason of the dignity of Him who invites us, Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. If His Majesty King Edward VII. were to command some of us to dine with him, just once, it may be surmised that there would be a good deal of rather keen competition for places, even though we might make a show of not caring very much. There would be some little flutter of excitement as to whether the chosen representatives of the school were to be "the eleven," or the monitors, or the imperators of the various classes, and so forth. And yet, after all, such a dinner at the royal table might turn out to be a rather tedious and ponderous affair, and at any rate we should not, any of us, expect any very intimate conversation with His Majesty, who could hardly be expected even to know our names, or to remember them if he had been told. But our Lord knew our names long before we knew them ourselves; He has watched our growth from infancy with a most tender solicitude and love; and He invites each one of us not as one of a body, or class, or group of men, but as a personal friend, as one whose close company He desires far more earnestly than the most devout among us can desire His.

2. And it is, secondly, a Great Supper by reason of the food that is set before us, which is no other

than the true Body and Blood of our Lord and King, really and substantially present here on the altar, and to be really and substantially received by us, as the supreme token of His love. And this heavenly food is received, as we know, not—so to say—in portions, as though each received a little, but as we have been chanting in the *Lauda Sion*,

> Sumit unus, sumunt mille,
> Quantum isti, tantum ille,
> Nec sumptus consumitur.
>
> Whether one receives, or many,
> Each hath much as all, nor any
> Can consume what all may eat.

This is, indeed, the very secret of His love, which is expressed still more briefly and succinctly in a single line of another hymn, which we owe, like the *Lauda Sion* and the *Pange Lingua*, to St Thomas of Aquino:—

> Sic totum omnibus quod totum singulis,

i.e., "So giveth He all to all that He giveth all to each"; yes, all to each one of us "without any reserve," or rather with no limitation except that which the narrowness of our own hearts may impose upon His love.

3. And in the third place, it is a Great Supper by reason of the event which it commemorates. We know the enthusiasm with which the survivors of

some great battle meet together year by year to celebrate in a commemorative banquet the anniversary of their common victory. But at the Lord's table we meet to commemorate that supreme victory over sin and death, which was achieved by Jesus, our King and Captain, on the Cross, a victory by comparison with the solid reality of which all those military operations which history records are but as stage-play, and all their glory but as the tinsel and paste that shimmers behind the footlights. "This do ye," He said, "in memory of Me." *Memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum misericors et miserator Dominus; escam dedit timentibus se.** In how many ways it is a "memorial" of Him and "of His wonderful works" we cannot now stay to reflect. For the present, be it enough to bear in mind that the Mass and the Holy Communion are for a perpetual remembrance of His passion and death, of His triumph over His great enemy and ours. "As often as ye shall eat this bread and drink this chalice," says St Paul, "ye show forth the death of the Lord until He come."†

4. And then, fourthly, it is a Great Supper by reason of the multitude and the dignity of the guests who are invited. It is indeed the Communion of Saints. From this heavenly food the martyrs have drawn their strength, confessors their courage, their patience, their perseverance; in this sacrament of love multitudes of holy virgins consecrated to

* Ps. cx. 4. † 1 Cor. xi. 26.

God, and devoted to lives of prayer or of charity, have found their consolation and their support. With the saints and the faithful of every age and of every race we sit down to this banquet; for in the sight of God, and in the mind of the Christian who has learned to see things as it were with our Lord's eyes, there are no differences of space and of time; and in this Sacrament most especially we are made one with Him, and one with all our fellow-Christians by virtue of our union with Him.

And if it should occur to any one to say that he is not conscious of all these qualities of the Holy Eucharist, that he feels little or no devotion when he approaches the holy table, he may find comfort in those words of our Lord: "Labour not for the food which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting."* As there are medicines which do not produce their effect all at once, but of which the beneficial results are experienced only in course of time, so we must not expect to taste here below the sweetness of this food, except so far as it may please our Lord to bestow on us some crumb of consolation for our encouragement; but we must be content to wait for the long day of eternity. Then and not till then shall we receive the full benefit and perceive the full sweetness of every Communion which we have made, in right dispositions, during this life. And it will be part of our purgatory to grieve

* St John vi. 27.

exceedingly that we were so cold and indifferent during life to "this wondrous gift, so far surpassing hope or thought." "A certain man made a great supper." Verily, the Holy Eucharist is, by every title, a royal banquet.

To this banquet we are invited to come and to come often, as often as the varying circumstances of our lives and the advice of our confessor may allow, whether in our present condition or after we have left school. The invitation is our Lord's own, interpreted for us by the Church. Why should any of us hold back? Why should any of us imitate those invited guests in the Gospel, who "began all at once to make excuse"? If we had a dear and intimate friend whom we loved very much, we should think it bad manners to refuse at his hands a proffered kindness. Why should we, on any occasion when it is possible for us to receive it, decline this gift which He offers, who is so much more to us than any merely human friend could possibly be—that gift which is no less than Himself?

"But they began all at once to make excuse."* Let us consider a little of what sort our excuses are. Excuses which proceed from a mistaken anxiety of conscience should be dealt with very tenderly, and it is the less needful to dwell upon them now because they are discussed so fully in Monseigneur de Ségur's little book on *Holy Communion*, which is well known

* St Luke xiv. 18.

to us all. "I am not fervent enough," "I am not worthy," "I fear to be too familiar," and so forth; the answer to such pleas we know very well. We receive Holy Communion, not because we are worthy or good or fervent, but in order that we may become so; just as we take our food, not because we are strong, but in order that we may become strong, or in order that we may keep up and maintain our strength. These, however, are objections that are best dealt with personally and in private. They are objections rather than excuses, and it is with excuses as such that we are now concerned.

What, then, are the excuses that we can make, and which some of us do perhaps make, for not heeding, oftener than we do, our Lord's invitation? Practically, a good many of them, if they were put into words, would amount to this, that "it is too much trouble." But this may mean several quite different things, inasmuch as the "trouble" may be of various kinds. "Too much trouble" may mean (1), in the first place, simply that I can't be bothered going to confession when I have important letters to write or an interesting book to read on a Saturday evening, or the eve of a feast, especially as I may perhaps be kept waiting a long time. Now let us look this excuse fairly in the face, and see whether it holds good, whether it is of sufficient weight to keep us from so great a boon as is Holy Communion. And it is the more desirable to do this because, if such

counter-attractions as we have here at school, or the time we may be kept waiting in this chapel, with a number of confessors at our service, is enough to deter us, how will it be when we have perhaps some distance to walk or ride in order to reach the church, a longer time, perhaps, to wait when we get there, and greater attractions to keep us away? We shall probably agree that "too much trouble," in this sense, is not a really valid excuse. It is, perhaps, not an excuse that would keep us away if our confessor were going to present us with a new tennis-racquet, or a nicely-bound set of Scott's novels, or any other gift that might be more to our taste. That seems a fair and reasonable test: Should we stay away if we were sure of receiving something that we would very much like to have? If not, then we will not stay away when what we are to receive is the grace of God, and Himself in person on the following morning.

Or again (2) "too much trouble" may mean, not the time consumed in going to confession, or the strength of counter-attractions, but the worry of preparation. Some one may say: "I find the examination of conscience a terrible labour, or at least a matter of great anxiety." But why so? It ought not to be. We know very well that we are not strictly bound to confess anything except mortal sins, and of these, please God, we have not been guilty; or, if we should have fallen, it cannot be

difficult to remember the kind of sins and the number of times we have committed them. And although it is, of course, very laudable and very desirable that we should accuse ourselves of venial sins also, it is neither laudable nor desirable that we should be over-anxious about an exhaustive enumeration of them, or about reckoning up the precise number of times that we have committed them. The sensible plan would seem to be to use a short form of examination of conscience, such as is to be found in the *Manual of Prayers for Youth*, and to take just as much time over each question as is needed to give a simple and straightforward answer. "Have I done so and so? Yes, once or twice, or several times a day." Then there is something of which to accuse myself. "Have I done so and so. Not that I remember." Very well, pass on at once. "Oh, but perhaps I have." Never mind. We are not bound to confess "perhaps"; and even if I have done it and forgotten it, any way it is not a mortal sin. Therefore I will pass on. It is God's will, because it is a matter of common prudence, that I should not worry myself about these vague possibilities. And then: "Have I done so and so?" the matter being this time of a more serious nature. Suppose now that the penitent has to say: "Alas! to my shame I have fallen into this sin, wilfully and deliberately." Here for the first time it will be well to delay for a few moments in order to remember the

number of occasions on which one may have fallen, and any circumstances that ought to be declared. But this will ordinarily be the case only with one or two of the questions in the form of examination. And thus, having given five minutes or so to our examination of conscience, or even less in the case of weekly confession, we shall have time to spare for the more profitable exercise of exciting ourselves to a sincere contrition both for the faults and sins of the week and for those of our past lives.

But perhaps (3) "too much trouble" means for some of us that it is too much trouble to keep out of sin, too much trouble to be always on our guard, too much trouble to resist temptation—in a word, that frequent Communion would fetter our liberty too much. We want to have a good time, and we think that we can't have a good time within the limits imposed by the Ten Commandments; we want to feel free to break bounds, and we feel that frequent Communion would keep us within those bounds (not of school discipline, but of God's precepts) which we wish to break. Of course we do not express our wish in so many words, but we may very well ask ourselves whether perhaps it is this, or something like this, that is really at the root of our thoughts when we excuse ourselves from frequent Communion on the ground that it is "too much trouble." Well, if this is the case, it is clear that we are in a bad way, in a dangerous mood; that is to say, in a mood that

is full of danger for ourselves. But have we not learned long since that there is no lasting happiness, no true happiness in sin? Do we not know that we cannot serve two masters, outwardly worshipping God and inwardly owning allegiance to His enemy the devil, with any real satisfaction to ourselves, even in this present life? And do we forget that in the next world this moral slavery to our evil passions will, if we do not repent of it in time, lead us to the everlasting slavery and misery of hell? No, we were born for something better than this. Let us be courageous and break our bonds now, and that we may keep ourselves in that state of true liberty which lies in freedom from sin and obedience to the law of God, let us make use as often as we can of the remedy which He has provided. Let us never allow ourselves to say that frequent Communion, which is the appointed means by which we may preserve ourselves in His holy grace, is "too much trouble."

And lastly, let us beware of allowing ourselves to be deluded by that most fallacious argument, that because in our after lives we shall not have the same facilities for frequent Communion as we have here, therefore it is not well to receive Communion too often now. We might as well say that, because we foresee a time when, being engaged on active service in some distant land, we shall have to be content with short rations, therefore we ought to take no dinner to-day; or that because two or three years

hence we shall not, perhaps, have two weekly half-holidays, therefore we should not play cricket or football on a Tuesday afternoon at College. Rather, let us make provision, now, for what may be wanting to us in later life.

"And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited that they should come, for now all things are ready. But they began all at once to make excuse." These men are not suitable models for our imitation.

XXV.

THE SACRED HEART*

"I have sanctified this house which thou hast built, to put my name there forever, and my eyes and my heart shall be there always."—3 KINGS ix. 3.

"What is a man that Thou should'st magnify him? Or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?"—JOB vii. 17.

THROUGHOUT this month of June, and more particularly during these days which immediately follow the Feast which we celebrated on Friday, our thoughts ought to be, and no doubt to a great extent have been and are, taken up with the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord. The devotion to the Sacred Heart is one that has for long years flourished, and please God will ever flourish, at Stonyhurst. But we have always to be on our guard lest our religion should become a matter of words and phrases, of fashions or external customs, and of feelings; of words and phrases that lose their vital meaning for us, of

* June 12, 1904 (Sunday within the Octave of the Feast of the Sacred Heart).

fashions and customs that will not always be at hand for our support; of feelings that are, of their nature, transient.

Not that any of these things are to be despised or made light of. Words are an indispensable instrument of thought, and a safeguard of doctrine, as St Paul knew very well when he exhorted his disciple Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words." And fashions or customary modes of common action are good and most helpful when—as in this case—they are well and wisely directed. And feelings, pious feelings and emotions, are a grace for which we have reason to be deeply thankful, for they are a powerful aid to solid and genuine devotion.

Nevertheless it is well that in our religious observances we should from time to time go, as it were, to the roots of things; that we should remind ourselves of the fundamental truths or doctrines on which these observances rest; lest by an undue reliance on what is external or, comparatively speaking, superficial, we should allow our devotion to rest too much on circumstances which for all of us will change as we grow older, rather than on the solid foundation which is unchanging under all circumstances and amid all the vicissitudes of life.

What, then, is the solid foundation of devotion to the Sacred Heart? What is the fundamental truth or doctrine whereon it rests? It is, of course, the great mystery of the Incarnation. But it is, more

particularly, the Incarnation viewed under the special aspect of a manifestation of God's love; a manifestation which calls for a return on our part, such as was not looked for under the Old Dispensation, and such as is not looked for from those who, at the present day, have never had the advantage of a sound training in the principles of the Catholic faith. It would be a very inadequate account of that great mystery to say that God the Son became man in order to atone for us by His death, and to instruct us by His teaching and by the example of His life. Atonement and instruction, these indeed are two most important among the purposes fulfilled by the Incarnation; but these two words are very far indeed from exhausting the whole truth concerning it.

The love of God, as God, for men is a great truth, the thought of which eludes our mental grasp, a truth which altogether transcends our comprehension. And the love of man for God, as God, is very apt to be somewhat cold and formal, somewhat lacking in the element of fervour and enthusiasm. On the other hand the attractions of the world and the incitements of our corrupt nature all conspire together to draw men away from God; and it is not too much to say that, as the advance of civilization brings within the reach of persons in easy circumstances an ever-increasing degree of comfort, an ever-growing variety of amusements and pastimes, an ever-multiplying number of temporal interests, the forces which

tend to distract the mind and the heart of man from his Creator, and from his true end which is the service of his Creator, grow stronger and stronger as the years and the centuries roll on. But it has pleased God to provide a counter-attraction which is abundantly strong enough for its purpose in every age, if only men will put themselves and keep themselves within the sphere of its influence. And that counter-attraction is to be found in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son made man, ever living among us, ever laying open to us the treasures of His Sacred Heart.

Our dearest Lord, by the circumstances of His Incarnation and birth, by the incidents and events of His sacred infancy, His boyhood and His public ministry, by His sufferings and by His cruel and shameful death, would arouse our attention, would awaken our interest, would evoke our sympathy, would appeal to our loyalty, would stimulate us to emulation,—above all, would win our hearts' love. If we cannot understand the love of God, as God, for men, at least we can understand human love, the love of a human heart; and so He would translate the love divine into a language intelligible to us all, and would take a human Heart that He might love us with a human love, and that we in return might love Him with a love that—though it has for its object a Man, a Man who could think as we think, and feel as we feel, and suffer as we suffer—should

yet, though human, be nothing less than the virtue of divine charity.

This is the meaning, this the purpose, of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, to bring prominently before our minds, and keep before our minds, the love of our King and Master, who has deigned to make us His friends and His brethren, Christ Jesus our Lord. Oh that He would teach those who are responsible for our guidance and instruction to help us to love Him; for that we may learn to love Him is the true reason of our being here. Classics, mathematics, science, modern languages, we might learn as well elsewhere; but of what use are these things if we have not—or rather be it said, if we had not—the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that tender devotion to His Blessed Mother which is the safeguard of our love of Him. As instruments to be used in His service, as means towards the attainment and exercise of His love, our studies, and indeed all our lawful occupations, have the highest value; but apart from His love and His service they would indeed be of no account, and might even be more harmful than useful, because they might be turned against Him and against His Church.

Oh that we may learn to love Him with all our hearts; for He alone is worthy of unstinted, unlimited, unconditioned love. Not that His love will interfere with the love of parents, brothers, sisters, true and genuine friends. On the contrary, the love of Jesus above all things will sanctify and purify and refine

and elevate and strengthen and make more genuine all these inferior and subordinate kinds of love. But love Him first and foremost; and Him in them and them in Him. For His sake, father and mother and brethren, and all earthly possessions, yea, even the happiness of the married state, holy as this is, are to be abandoned — if He should demand it. And whether He should demand this sacrifice or not, at least He will have our hearts. He will reign there and rule there if we will let Him, and He will brook no rival in His sovereignty.

Let us pray then, that we may learn to love—not as He deserves, but as far as we are capable of loving —this one and only perfect and flawless Friend. Have we ever known any one in whom we could confide without reserve? Is there any one—except God's minister in the sacrament of Penance — to whom we could reveal the state of our conscience? Should we, or could we, even if we wished, tell our most secret thoughts even to our parents? Is there any man living with whom we could hope to live for years in closest intimacy without a shadow of quarrel or misunderstanding? But with Him there is no reserve. He knows all that we can tell Him before we can form the words with our lips, or shape the thoughts in our mind. With Him, or rather on His side, there is not, there can never be, any shadow of misunderstanding, with Him no quarrel but of our own making. With Him all that we have ever done for

Him, howsoever trifling, is treasured up in grateful memory long after we have forgotten it ourselves; it is treasured up to be repaid ten thousandfold in the life to come, besides being repaid a hundredfold here in this world, in ways that our powers of perception are too dull to recognise. All that we have done for Him is treasured up in the Sacred Heart of Jesus—unless we repudiate it by the folly, the unspeakable folly and the base ingratitude of mortal sin. And with Him all that we have done amiss is blotted out and forgotten, provided that we have repented with our whole hearts.

"Ye sons of men," cries the Psalmist, "how long will you be dull of heart? How long will you love vanity and seek after a lie?"* Do we think to assuage the hunger of the soul by the consumption of sweetstuff? Or to satisfy the capacities, the aspirations of the heart, with that self-indulgent and foolish and base counterfeit of love which is one of the most pestilent forms of mischief that can contaminate a school?

These things are, as the phrase goes, "not good enough" for us who were created for something better. And that something better we shall find in the love of Jesus and of His Blessed Mother, and we shall find it nowhere else.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Let that sweet name be first upon your lips on awakening, and the last to be

* Ps. iv. 3.

invoked when you retire to rest. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! speak to Him as a familiar friend, and tell Him all your joys and all your troubles, and let neither prosperity allure you nor adversity scare you away from His love. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Even though you should fall into sin, yet call on His name with confidence, protest your sorrow, and implore of Him to take you back, and restore you once more to the love of His Sacred Heart.

XXVI.

ALMSGIVING *

"Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and heaped up, and running over, shall they give into your bosom."—ST LUKE vi. 38.

WE have tried to stir ourselves up to a more ardent and tender love of our Lord, by the consideration of the love of His Sacred Heart for us. Now we have to remind ourselves that our love for Him in return ought not to exhaust itself, on the one hand, in tender feelings, or, on the other hand, in merely keeping the commandments, but that it ought to reach forward to something more solid than mere feelings, to something more generous than a more or less grudging observance of a series of prohibitions. If we really love a person very much, we are not content merely to avoid offending him; our love makes us desirous of doing something for him, of giving him something, and the more we love the more we are impelled to do and to give. If, then, our meditations on the

* June 19, 1904 (Fourth Sunday after Pentecost).

Sacred Heart and on the Blessed Sacrament, and our more frequent communions during this month, have so stirred our souls that we can say in real and genuine earnest, that we love our Lord with our whole hearts, why then we must cast about—likewise in real and genuine earnest — for some means of showing our love by deeds and by gifts.

What, then, are we to give to our Lord? Or rather, what are we to give back to Him, since all that we have is His, and He has only entrusted it to our keeping to try, as it were, what use we shall make of it? It is the question of the Psalmist: *Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi?* —"What shall I render to the Lord for all that He hath given unto me?" In general terms we all know the answer to this question, but it is worth considering a little in detail, lest we should cheat ourselves with mere words. Once more, then, let us recur to the example of human love. If we wish to make a present to some one whom we really care for, we take a little pains to consider what that person would like best. We don't give him something that will be of no use to him. And then, again, a present, assuming it to be useful, is more valued if it is something that we have made ourselves, and over which we have taken some pains, than if it had been merely bought in the nearest shop. But indeed we need not puzzle ourselves overmuch as to what our Lord would like best. Above and before all things, He wishes that

we should give Him ourselves, that is to say, that we should devote to His service the faculties and senses with which He has endowed us. And unless we do this, all other gifts and offerings would be of small account.

But although this gift of ourselves is the chief thing that our Lord asks of us, it is not the only thing. Even our best friend, though he would not be content with trifling services, yet does occasionally ask and expect certain trifling services from us. And so our Lord asks from us in pledge of our love, not only ourselves but also things external to ourselves; He asks a share of our possessions, and He asks it on behalf of our less prosperous brethren; in other words, He asks us to show our love to Him by our alms to the poor and the needy. Now, by way of gaining some light on this subject, it may be useful for each one of us to do a little sum in mental arithmetic; for in this, as in other matters, the important thing is that we should do our thinking for ourselves. Let us then count up in our own minds the amount that we spend, or that is spent on our behalf by our parents, in the course of a school year, on games and sports, with their subscriptions, implements, and appropriate articles of clothing, on newspapers and magazines for our playrooms, and on—let us say—refreshments. How does it figure up? What is the total? Of course it will not be the same for every one, and therefore it is necessary that each one should

do his own reckoning. Is it £*x*, or £*y*, or £*z*; or how many pounds? Now, in the second place, let us add up the amount of our contributions, in the course of the same school year, to the various alms-boxes at the end of the chapel yonder, and to the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, together with what we may have spent on votive candles or for any other pious or charitable purpose. Again, what is the total? How many shillings? And now, having performed these two processes of addition, we may go through a further process of division, dividing the sum of our expenditure on amusements and refreshments by the amount of our expenditure in alms. How does it work out? What is the proportion? Possibly, in some cases, it may be a little higher than we should have thought if we had not taken the trouble to look into the matter.

Now it is not intended to imply that the outcome of such a calculation would afford, in the case of the majority or even of a large minority, any grounds for self-reproach. Any one who knows more than a very little about boys in a Catholic school is aware that instances of remarkable generosity in almsgiving are not uncommon, and that there is a very general readiness to give on behalf of any deserving object. Moreover, in the case of boys at school, a considerable expenditure on amusements is a matter of practical necessity, if not for each individual on his own account, at least in the general

interest, for all those reasons which make public games and sports an important part of our training.

To what purpose, then, are such calculations as those which have been suggested? They are useful partly, of course, because when we are thus brought face to face with facts on which some of us may not have seriously reflected before, it may happen that one or another will see that his generosity to our Lord has not been quite what he would have wished it to be; and if so, he will draw his own practical conclusion. But our sum in proportion may prove to have been useful principally in relation to our future, and even to our remoter future. It is well that we should consider with ourselves what may reasonably be expected of us in the matter of almsgiving when we have reached an age and a position in life at which and in which the claims of recreation will not be so great, relatively speaking, as they very legitimately are at present. We are considering, now, not what is of strict obligation, but what is becoming on the part of one who wishes to make a return of love to our Lord. Under the Old Testament, as we know, the Jews were expected to give, for religious and charitable purposes, at least a tithe, *i.e.*, a tenth part, of their income; and from the Book of Tobias we learn that devout Jews went much further than this, and gave a triple tithe, three-tenths, or not far short of one-third. Now it may be thought, perhaps,

that an ordinary Christian might be expected to do as much as an ordinary Jew, and a devout Christian as much as a devout Jew; and so far as the circumstances are parallel, it would seem that the expectation would be not unreasonable. But then it must be admitted that the circumstances are not quite parallel, because the conditions of life are so different. The whole manner of living among the Jews in Palestine, or in Babylonia during the exile, was much simpler than our manner of life in modern times. There are hundreds of things which are practically necessaries of life now for persons in our circumstances, which the Jews in those remote ages had never heard of. In the days when the law of tithes was first introduced, wealth was computed principally in flocks and herds and in the fruits of the earth; and in as much as a man's capacity for the personal consumption of sheep and oxen, and even of corn and wine, is limited, and they had not many comforts and luxuries on which to expend their surplus, it was much easier for them to pay tithe than it would be for us. Moreover, here in England, rates and taxes make a considerable inroad upon a man's income. And a notable portion of the rates, besides a small percentage of taxation, is devoted to what may fairly be called charitable purposes, for instance the poor-rate and the school-rate, and the proportion of tax-money that goes to education. Even supposing,

then, that a man were determined that whatever the conditions of his life might be, he would yet contrive to set aside a tithe for religion and charity, he would be entitled, in computing his tithe, to include these compulsory disbursements. Besides, the tithe is for us in no sense a matter of obligation; and indeed it is commonly held to be unwise and unprofitable to attempt to lay down any hard-and-fast law on the subject. Therefore, what has been said is not intended to create scruples of conscience, as though we were likely to commit sin in this matter.

But assuming that, in our after lives, we wish to be generous to our Lord and to the poor for His sake, then it is certainly desirable that we should look rather closely to the proportion between our expenditure on mere amusements and the amount of our alms. A man could hardly be called generous who, while he spent large sums on motoring, shooting, fishing and hunting, racing, yachting, travelling for pleasure, expensive cigars and wines, superfluous clothes, and so forth, was yet niggardly of his money when he was appealed to for an alms in the name of our Lord. We need not be solicitous about fairly necessary expenses, that is to say, such as are necessary to enable us to live in accordance with our state of life. We can't live on beans and bacon, or dress in fustian, or wear hobnailed boots. Our Lord does not ask this of us. But if we wish to

be really generous to Him, then we must be very much on our guard against slavishly copying the fashions of a self-indulgent and frivolously extravagant section of society, which spends pounds on amusements, and flings pence to the poor.

The standard of worldly men is not high enough for those who have learned—or ought to have learned —to aim at something better.

Here, then, is a subject which may profitably occupy our thoughts; something which those of us more especially whose school life is drawing to a close, may find it useful to ponder over between this present moment and the time of our leaving school. It is a matter in which we should not trust to occasional impulses of generosity, but on which we should strive to regulate our conduct by fixed and sound principles. Nor need we be in the least afraid that we shall be the losers by courageously carrying out, through life, the counsel of almsgiving. In to-day's Gospel we read how our Lord repaid the brief loan of Simon Peter's boat by the miraculous draught of fishes. Looked at from a quite prosaic and purely temporal point of view, it was a good bargain; "good business" for Simon Peter and his partners. And although it is not to be forgotten that Jesus forthwith called Simon and Andrew and James and John to leave the fish which they had just caught, to leave their nets and their boats and all they had, and to follow Him, He did not ask this great sacrifice at

their hands till He had given them, as it were, an object-lesson as to the scale on which any service rendered to Him would be rewarded. "He who hath pity on the poor," we read in the Book of Proverbs, "lendeth to the Lord."* The security is good, and the rate of interest is high. Therefore, in the words of Tobias to his son: "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it."† And again, in the words of our Lord Himself: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and heaped up, and running over, shall they give into your bosom."‡

* Prov. xix. 17. † Tob. iv. 7-12. ‡ St Luke vi. 38.

XXVII.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH*

"The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise ; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong ; and the base things of the world, and things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not [*i.e.* things that might seem to be of no account] that He might bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in His sight."—1 COR. i. 27-29.

HOWEVER ornate and splendid may be the liturgical functions and ceremonies which take place at other times of the year, and notably in Holy Week, there is no season which, in the venerable city of Rome, witnesses a more striking and spontaneous outburst of popular devotion than the latter end of the month of June, with its rapid succession of festivals ; those of St Aloysius, of St John the Baptist, of SS. John and Paul, and of the two great Apostles SS. Peter and Paul. And a marked characteristic of this popular devotion on the part of the still faithful section of the inhabitants of the eternal city, is its en-

* June 26, 1904 (Fifth Sunday after Pentecost).

thusiasm, an enthusiasm which is especially awakened when those saints are commemorated who lived and died in Rome itself, first and foremost the two great Apostles, then the early martyrs, such as St Clement, St Cecilia, St Agnes, St Lawrence, St Sebastian, SS. John and Paul; and then again saints of more modern times, St Philip Neri, St Ignatius of Loyola, St Aloysius, St Stanislas, and St John Berchmans. Now what is the secret of this enthusiasm, of this patriotic pride which the Roman people takes in its saints, a patriotic pride which has no more than a very partial and inadequate parallel in the pride which an Englishman takes in the exploits and the career of some great general? It may be found in the sense—a confused sense it may be, but a very real sense—of a victory won against great odds, won by the most unlikely means. It is the sense that, in the saints, God has indeed chosen the foolish things of the world—that is to say, men whom the worldly-minded mistakenly set down as foolish—to overcome the wise, that is to say, the wise in their own conceit; that He has chosen the weak things of the world, and what might seem to be of no account, in order to overcome—by a moral and peaceful victory—the power of persecuting tyranny and the pomp of power; and that in and through the lives of the saints God has been justified of His choice.

A poor fisherman and a poor tent-maker, an obscure deacon, and the son of a village shoemaker, these and

half-a-dozen weak and delicately-nurtured maidens of no great consideration in the world's esteem, are among Rome's heroes and heroines; and although in that same noble company, there are some who, like Ignatius, Aloysius, and Stanislas, were of very distinguished birth, they won their victory, not by making use of their worldly advantages, but by despising and renouncing them. This is the plain common-sense of the matter. It was this sense of a great moral victory, achieved in spite of all outward appearances, that fired the enthusiasm of St Paul, and made him "glory," as he says himself, in the Cross of Christ, the source and origin of all such victories. And this it is that appeals to the hearts of simple-minded folk—whether learned or unlearned matters not at all—who have been brought up in the traditions of the Catholic faith, or who, later in life, have imbibed and assimilated them. It appeals to those whose minds and hearts have not been spoiled by the false maxims of a godless civilisation, of that modern paganism which in our days has so largely invaded all classes of society, and with which even we, Catholics though we be, are only too apt to be unconsciously infected.

Among a series of maxims, used to fill up the tail of a page in one of our popular magazines, may be found these words, intended as an expression of concentrated wisdom: "There is no merit in sacrifice devoid of service." Rightly understood, they are of

course perfectly true; for it were folly to give up anything that is good, except for the sake of something that is better, and the element of sacrifice would be wanting if the desire for that better thing were purely and merely selfish. But the saying that "there is no merit in sacrifice devoid of service" is one that is extremely apt to be misunderstood and misused, particularly with reference to the lives of the saints. For worldly men, that is to say, those whose aims, ambitions, interests, are limited to this visible and tangible universe, will tell us that they cannot see what useful purpose was served by the self-sacrifice of those heroes of the faith whom the Catholic Church delights to honour. They can understand the heroism of the soldier who dies in battle; for he dies in order to secure some temporal advantage for his country. They can understand the heroism of the hospital nurse, in so far as her labours are directed to the relief of pain and temporal suffering. But beyond the grave they do not look; and they fail to perceive that the one thing which is most needful for the true well-being of mankind, even in this life, is that men should look beyond this life for their reward, and in the meanwhile should recognise the claims of God on their allegiance; and consequently that the truest heroes are those who in all ages have devoted themselves, at whatever cost of their own personal comfort and convenience, nay, even at the cost of their lives, to the upholding of

this principle; that their sacrifice has been the hardest and their service the greatest who have spent themselves and all their energies in the hallowing of God's name, the spread of His kingdom, and the carrying out of His will here on earth. But those in whom the Catholic faith and Catholic instincts are strong do perceive all this, and hold it with a firm conviction; and therefore it is that they honour the saints with an enthusiastic and affectionate devotion, such as is never paid to the memory of the world's heroes, however distinguished.

We have devoted some attention to the subject of generosity to God in the matter of almsgiving, and we thought of it not merely in its bearing on our conduct here and now, but more especially as it affects our future lives. And now we may no less profitably take into consideration the not less important subject of generosity in the matter of work for God, likewise in the course of our future lives. And among the many motives which should stimulate us to this generosity, not the least is that which is afforded by the example of the saints. In the light of that example we may learn, and we should learn, to estimate things at their true value; not to be dazzled by outward show in others, nor to covet these outward shows for ourselves; not to be discouraged if our surroundings should be homely and prosaic; not to be elated if our circumstances should be outwardly prosperous, with the prosperity either

of wealth or of honour. "If riches abound," says the Psalmist, and the same may be said of all manner of honours and distinctions, "set not thy heart upon them."* We ought not to stand in need of a warning against allowing ourselves to be drawn into the vortex of that mad scramble for pleasure and enjoyment which engulfs so many at the present day, and to which thoughtful men, from the late Pope and his present successor downwards, have pointed as one of the most alarming signs of the times. But it may be very much to the purpose to strengthen ourselves in the resolution never to content ourselves with settling down—at least out of business hours—to a lazy and self-indulgent kind of existence, as though, being comfortably circumstanced, we had no other end in life but to *be* comfortable. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die";† or, "Let us eat and drink wisely and in moderation, and then we shall perhaps live till the day after to-morrow"; neither of these maxims—the maxim of the votary of pleasure, or the maxim of respectable but merely worldly prudence—neither of these is "good enough" for us as Christians.

Please God, we shall all of us aim at something better than this. Please God, we shall go through our course in this college, and when the time comes we shall leave this college, with a fixed determination that we can do something, that God asks us to do

* Ps. lxi. 11. † 1 Cor. xv. 32.

something, for Him; something over and above the duties of our profession. God forbid that we should resemble certain Catholic young men of whom an experienced priest in London once said, many years since, that not a stroke of work on behalf of the Church was to be got out of them; that they had no idea outside of their professional occupation except to enjoy themselves. If such was indeed the case, it is just possible that the reason may have been that the matter had not been adequately and with due urgency brought before their minds while they were still young; and therefore it behooves us, betimes, to think seriously about the matter, and to keep it before our minds.

A good deal has been said and written, of late, about the importance of cultivating in boys the idea of citizenship, and of bringing home to them the greatness of the British Empire. Now, if this movement had for its purpose the fostering of a kind of pharisaic pride, which is, after all, but a spurious form of patriotism, to this extent it would be mischievous. But so far as it tends to foster in our minds a deep sense of our responsibilities, collective and personal, a deep sense of our duties to our fellow-men, based on our duty to God, it is excellent and well timed. But much more is it incumbent on us as Catholics, members of the world-wide Church, but of a small minority in this country, to bethink ourselves of our duties towards our fellow Catholics, and to stir

ourselves up to a generosity which is ready to go far beyond the strict limits of duty.

As for the details of our work for God and the Church after we have left school, these must, of course, depend very largely on our particular circumstances; but there is one general principle which may stand us in good stead under all circumstances; and it is this: Do not suppose that because no very wide outlet for your zeal may seem to lay itself open before you just at first, therefore you can do nothing. If you will begin with the little that lies to your hand in your own immediate neighbourhood, opportunities will increase and multiply faster than you think. You know how the Society of St Vincent de Paul, which affords so admirable an object-lesson in the possibilities of work for laymen, grew out of very small beginnings, out of the determination of those quite young men to do something, even on a very modest scale, by way of personal charity to the poor. And this is but one instance of many that might be given. Again and again, through all the Christian centuries, and in every department of good works, the parable of the grain of mustard-seed has received its verification. And it will be verified in your own case, if you will be content with humble and obscure beginnings, if you will guard yourselves against despising them because they are not brilliant and showy, or because they may seem at first somewhat dull and monotonous. It was so that the saints

began ; it was so that the saints succeeded. And it is so that you will succeed, not necessarily in the eyes of men, but most certainly in the sight of God, to whom alone you will look for your reward. In the words of the Apostle, read in the Mass* appointed for this present Sunday : "Who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good?"

* 1 Pet. iii. 13.

XXVIII.

GOOD WORK FOR WILLING WORKERS*

"Who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good?"—1 PET. iii. 13.

MORE than once we have considered, in general terms, the proposition that a Catholic layman ought by no means to be content with acquitting himself creditably of the duties of his profession; but that he should make it his endeavour to render some active service to God and the Church, according to the measure of his gifts and opportunities. We may now look into the subject a little more in detail; all the more appropriately at the present time, because the day is fast approaching when some of us will have to make our first start in life, and we cannot begin too soon to make ourselves useful.

* Saturday, June 25, 1904. Address to the members of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This address, though actually delivered before No. XXVII., logically forms the sequel to it, and is therefore placed here.

What sort of things, then, can a layman do, here in England at the present day, to help forward the cause of God and the Church? It is plain that no cut-and-dried answer, suitable to all alike, can be given to such a question as this; but a few suggestions may be offered, of which, so far as they commend themselves to the judgment of any of us, he may avail himself so far as his own particular circumstances shall hereafter permit.

And first of all, to lay down a sort of preliminary condition, it is to be observed that, as a rule, a layman will not be conspicuous for his zeal unless he has learned to take an intelligent interest in the affairs and the needs of the Church outside his own parish. And to this purpose he would do well to direct at least a portion of his reading. He ought to know something of the history of the Church in this country during the nineteenth century, something of the lives of distinguished English Catholics, and of the work which they have done. But it is at least equally important, and may be much more important, to keep himself *au courant* of what is going on—as touching the fortunes of the Church—at the present day. It is rather disappointing, when the name of a Catholic newspaper or periodical is mentioned in the presence of one who is sufficiently well-acquainted with the ephemeral literature of the hour, to find that he has never even heard of it. And it is only one degree less disappointing to hear some youthful person airily

remark that such or such a Catholic publication is of "no use," or that "there is nothing in it"; which may possibly mean no more than that he, for his part, has never taken the trouble to read it. Now, no one in his senses would recommend a young man weekly to toil through every column of the *Tablet*, for instance, or the *Catholic Times;* but it is desirable that he should form at least such an acquaintance with one or other of these papers as will enable him to know how and where to look for such information as may be of practical use. No one can be enthusiastic about affairs concerning which he knows nothing or next to nothing. It is plain that if we are desirous of taking our part as laymen in the Catholic life of the country, we must begin by taking an intelligent interest in the things that make up that life; and this we should hardly be able to do if we were to follow the fashion—only too prevalent at the present day—of despising or ignoring Catholic periodical publications.

Now, this preliminary condition to usefulness being presupposed, it is, in the next place, a good rule never to lose or shirk an opportunity of serving on any board or committee to which one may be nominated or elected, or for which one may be invited to become a candidate in the Catholic interest. Neither the possibility of such an invitation or election, nor the possibility that the service might be shirked or avoided, is to be thought of as merely chimerical. It happened the other day that a young

Catholic layman, only four or five years out of college, who is a noted cricketer, gave up what for him would have been a very pleasant cricket week, solely for the purpose of attending some board meeting or other at which the Bishop of his diocese had specially requested his presence. Some men, even—it is to be feared—some Catholics, would have chosen the cricket week. Please God, this would not have been our choice. If a Catholic of some means and education is known to be a steady man on whom reliance can be placed, he may, for instance, very probably be asked to become one of the managers of an elementary school. This is, perhaps, not a particularly pleasant or exciting prospect: the appointment will entail a certain expenditure of time on work of a somewhat dull and routine character, and is sure to involve, from time to time, some unpleasant and disappointing experiences. But the work, uninteresting as it may be, is of very considerable importance. For the days are over when our elementary schools were practically managed by the priest alone. The priest is now, at best, only the chairman of a board of managers, a majority of whom will ordinarily be laymen, and not always Catholic laymen; for two of them must always be appointed by the local educational authority. Very much, it need hardly be said, must necessarily depend on the character of the board; and this, in its turn, may be to a great extent determined by

the personal influence of one who may be, with the exception of the priest, the only educated man at the meetings. And what has been said of service on a board of school managers holds good, of course, *mutatis mutandi*, of service on a parish or borough council, or on any other committee.

Now it may be useful to lay down for ourselves some elementary rules which it is well to observe in all such committee work.

1. First of all, a man should take some pains to inform himself beforehand of the merits of any question on the *agenda*, so that he may come to the meeting with at least a provisional opinion, based on rational grounds. He ought, of course, to keep an open mind; for a provisional opinion is not a fixed conviction. But neither is an *open* mind the same thing as an *empty* mind.

2. Secondly, having formed his opinion, he should state it frankly and clearly. Nor is this a superfluous counsel. One may sometimes hear a man complain that his views have not been adopted by a committee, when the real fact is that the committee have not been put in possession of his views, for the simple reason that he has not known how to state them clearly and intelligently. For any possible defect on this score, it may be hoped that our Debating Society, with its wise regulation as to short speeches, will be found to have provided an efficient remedy.

3. Thirdly, having stated his opinion, a man should,

under ordinary circumstances, be prepared to abide by the decision of the majority, and to make the best of it. At the same time, the tyranny of majorities having passed almost into a proverb, it is plain that cases may arise in which some manifest injustice calls for persevering opposition, by all lawful and constitutional means, till redress has been secured.

4. Fourthly, although we need not hesitate to express an opinion which may happen not to be in accord with that of our parish priest (or missionary rector), we shall do well never to *vote* against him unless we are very sure of our ground. A consultative committee, like a council of war, is most useful, and a priest may learn much from the advice of intelligent laymen; but a meddlesome committee or a meddlesome committee man, is apt to be a great nuisance, and to do more harm than good. After all, in the case of a school committee, the real care and anxiety of the business rests on the priest; and if after carefully considering what we have proposed he is still of a different opinion, we shall, generally speaking, do more good by supporting than by thwarting him. On the other hand if, later on, we should be elected on a Board of Poor Law Guardians or on a Borough or Parish Council, or the like, we may have occasion for very strenuous action where any Catholic interests are attacked or endangered, as they often are.

But even without soaring to the sublime heights of a seat on the Parish Council or on a Board of Guardians, there may still be much that we can do. We all know at least something about the Society of St Vincent de Paul, of which so many former Stonyhurst boys have been members; but it may be useful to recall to mind the circumstances of its origin. Its founder was M. Frédéric Ozanam. In the year 1833, Ozanam was a student at the University of Paris, and just twenty years of age. The professors at the University were all of them at that time more or less hostile to the Catholic religion; and the story of the protests raised by Ozanam and some of his Catholic fellow-students against the anti-religious teaching of Jouffroy and others, forms a stimulating page in the history of the Catholic revival in France in the nineteenth century. Now it was one of the taunts that were habitually directed against Ozanam and his friends that, although the Church had fulfilled a useful function during the Middle Ages, it was now quite out of date, and incapable of doing any real good. One evening, Ozanam and two of his fellow-students, M. Lamache and another, were discussing this objection, and Ozanam said in effect: "Why should we not *do* something? It is all very well to talk and argue, but the best kind of argument is action. Can't we make a beginning by doing something for the poor here in Paris?" They communicated their idea to some other members of their class, by

whom for the most part the idea that they could effect anything serious in a city which contained some 80,000 more or less destitute poor, was declared to be absurd, and they were laughed at as visionary enthusiasts. However, they managed to enlist the services of five companions, and these eight held their first meeting in May 1833. Their idea was, not merely to put pence into the poor box, but themselves to visit the poor in their own homes, each member making himself responsible for one or two families. From these small beginnings the work grew and prospered exceedingly, so that, in 1858, twenty-five years after the establishment of the Society, it numbered 2000 members in Paris alone, and branches had been established in all the chief towns of France, as well as in Italy, Spain, Belgium, England, Ireland, and the United States; and with varying success it has gone on increasing to the present day.

Two other points may be mentioned in connection with this admirable Society. It is essentially a religious association. One of the first acts of its earliest members was to put themselves and their work under the special protection of our Blessed Lord by publicly taking part in the Corpus Christi procession at Nanterre; all the meetings of the Society are opened with prayer, and provision is made for prayers and Masses for deceased members, just as in our Sodality and other religious confraternities. Moreover, the members are exhorted always

to remember, when they visit the poor, that if they do it in the right spirit they will gain far more than they give; that they are not to look down upon the poor and treat them with a kind of lofty condescension, but rather to regard them with reverence as the representatives of our Lord, and moreover as persons from whom they may have a good deal to learn in the way of patience, humility, and other virtues. In connection with this, it may be mentioned that when Ozanam came to England on one occasion, to see after the working of the Society in London and elsewhere, he was a good deal struck with the effort which it seemed to require on the part of an English gentleman to shake hands and put himself on easy terms with a working man, even in the working man's own home. It may be hoped that in the course of half a century much of the old-fashioned stiffness has worn off, and that none of us would find any serious difficulty in this particular. Yet even with us there may be need of a little self-training before we thoroughly learn the lesson how to treat men, quite irrespectively of their rank and social position, with the respect which is due to their personal character and not to their clothes or to their account at their bankers'.

"Who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good?" In the practice of active zeal and charity we shall find a sure remedy for that sense of depression, that ceaseless and peaceless craving for change

and excitement, which lies at the root of so much frivolity and extravagance even among grown men who are, to say the least, old enough to know better. "Who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good?"

XXIX.

THE PRICE OF OUR REDEMPTION*

Empti estis pretio magno—"Ye have been bought at a great price."—1 COR. vi. 20.

IT is an old truth, but it is one which we are constantly in danger of forgetting, or at least of practically disregarding, that we do not belong to ourselves. It is a truth that is brought before us in the title of that excellent little book of Father Joseph Rickaby's which we all know and esteem, and with which it were to be wished that we were even more familiar: *Ye are Christ's.* We belong, not to ourselves but to God, and to God through Jesus Christ, who is God the Son made Man.

1. We belong to God by two principal titles. We belong to Him entirely and absolutely by the right of creation. On Him as our Creator we depend for every moment of our existence, we depend on Him for everything that we possess; not merely for external things, such as money, clothes, food,

* Sunday, July 3, 1904 (Feast of the Precious Blood).

and so forth, but for our whole being, body and soul, for the limbs and organs and senses of our body, and for all the faculties of our soul. But we belong to Him also, and more specifically we belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, by the right and title of Redemption. He has bought us, purchased us, at the price of His Precious Blood which He shed for us. Now it is to be understood, of course, that the expression of the Apostle: "Ye are bought with a great price," like every other attempt to express divine mysteries in human language, is in the nature of a metaphor. But in this, as in other like cases, the metaphor, so far from exaggerating the truth, falls immeasurably short of it. We do in very deed belong to our Lord, not less but much more entirely and unreservedly than any article which we may have purchased belongs to us. The things which we possess are ours only in a limited and relative sense. They are ours in the sense that we have a right to them, under ordinary circumstances, as against our fellow-men. But we have no claim, we can have no possible claim, as against God; and on the other hand our Lord's claim upon us is absolute and supreme. He has, so to say, bought us out and out. *Empti estis pretio magno*—"Ye have been bought at a great price."

Now all this, on a first hearing, is not very gratifying or flattering to our pride. We don't like

the idea of "belonging" to any one. The notion of being "bought" seems to suggest a kind of slavery; and our natural as well as our national instincts revolt at the mention of slavery. But no, we have not been bought into slavery. Rather, we have been bought out of slavery into the state and condition of true liberty; into that "freedom," of which St Paul speaks, "wherewith Christ hath made us free." * Or, to state the matter—as St Paul himself elsewhere states it—with a nearer approximation to the truth, we have been bought out of a dishonourable slavery, or out of the danger and prospect of such a slavery, into a service which is entirely, and in all respects, honourable.†

Since, then, He has bought us, since we belong to Him, let us not fling away the priceless boon of this honourable service,—which is indeed the only true liberty that can be enjoyed in this life,—in favour of the degrading servitude of sin. Our Lord has told us that we cannot serve two masters;‡ and most assuredly it were impossible to obey two masters who are at mortal enmity one with the other. But we must not forget that, whereas we cannot serve two masters, we must serve one, whether we like it or not. No man really is his own master, however much he may imagine himself to be so. When he

* Gal. iv. 31; *cf.* Rom. viii. 21; Gal. v. 13; St James i. 25; ii. 12.

† Rom. vi. 15-22.

‡ St Matt. vi. 24.

thinks he is free, when he has thrown off all restraints and set at nought the commandments of God and of the Church, he is only like a fish with the hook in its mouth; when the fisherman pays out plenty of line from the reel, he rushes away, thinking that he has escaped and is free; but sooner or later he will be pulled up short and hauled in. There is no possibility of escape. Welcome or unwelcome as it may be, according to the difference of men's dispositions, the truth remains that we are Christ's by virtue of our redemption. And, since we cannot escape the law of service, we shall do well to renew our resolution this morning, that, as we are His by right, so also we will be His by our own free choice. It is a choice that was long since made; but it is a choice which should be daily ratified, and which we do in fact ratify every day, at least with our lips, in our morning and night prayers

2. But the Apostle reminds us, not merely that we have been bought or purchased, but that we have been bought "at a great price"; and this is a second point, which we may now profitably consider. A man in his senses does not pay a great price except for something which is either of great value in itself, or at least highly valued by the purchaser. That our Lord paid a great price for us shows that He values us highly, that we are precious in His sight. Not merely is my soul of great value in His estimation, but all that makes up my life is precious to Him. Our

time is precious, our powers of mind and heart, and the organs and senses of our bodies, all are precious; for all these things are a part of ourselves and a part of His purchase. And this being so, it behooves us to look to it that we do not hold ourselves cheap, that we do not waste ourselves, our time, and our powers, perhaps even our lives, upon things that are unworthy of us. And it behooves us further to remember that nothing is worthy of us, whether as regards our choice of a state of life, or as regards our conduct in the state of our choice, but the best that we can attain to. That we should aim at the highest that is within our reach, is our Lord's own rule; who, when He had laid down the counsels of perfection, said: *Qui potest capere, capiat.** The dulness or the short-sightedness of another will not excuse me. Each one of us will be judged by his own lights, by his own ideals.

We have heard it said, and truly said, that *noblesse oblige;* that we owe to this college a debt of good and upright conduct in our after life. But there is another and a higher nobility that constrains us. Our sense of loyalty to our college appeals, and rightly appeals, to our imagination and our feelings. But, after all, our debt to Stonyhurst fades into insignificance by comparison with our debt to Him who redeemed us "at a great price"; or rather, is but a tiny fraction of that fundamental debt. Let us consider, then, that we are appealed to, on this Feast

* St Matt. xix. 12.

of the Precious Blood, not as Stonyhurst men, but as Christians, as Christians who have had exceptional opportunities of "learning Christ" aright; not as pupils of Jesuit teachers, but as disciples of Jesus, whose servants we all are, teachers and taught, alike; not as members of a local institution, however distinguished its record, but—in St Paul's phrase—as "citizens of no mean city"; as members of the world-wide and age-long Church; as subjects of that kingdom of God for whose maintenance and spread in the world we daily pray. *Noblesse oblige!* We have been bought at a great price. It is not for us to hold ourselves cheap, but to aim at the best we know.

3. But yet again, when we say that Jesus has bought us at a great price, the word "price" conveys a very faint and shadowy idea of the real nature of the great work of our Redemption. It was at the cost, not of a sum of money, but of personal toil and hardship, and, in the end, of most intense suffering, willingly undertaken and endured on our behalf, that He redeemed us, and bought us—as it were—into His service. And it is no half-hearted service that we owe Him in return; no mere abstention from positive offences against Him—that were a poor and cold fashion of love—but a resolute determination to let no opportunity escape us of rendering Him that help and co-operation in His great work which He condescends to ask from us, as though we

were, not His bounden servants, but His favoured friends.

We know very well that in other departments of life success is not to be attained by half-hearted service, by limp and languid efforts. Neither in games, nor in business, nor in the profession of arms, nor in the law, nor in Parliament, nor in any pursuit or occupation whatsoever, can half measures lead to more than middling results. Nor can they lead to more than middling results in the spiritual life. But it is not on these considerations of self-interest that we should chiefly dwell. Our Lord, in act if not in word, appeals rather to our sense of gratitude. He has not been half-hearted in His service of us; as this feast of His most Precious Blood should remind us. Look at Him as He prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, His body bathed in a sweat of blood, His human soul afflicted with an agony of desolation; He is bowed down to the earth as He makes (if we may so say) His great act of contrition for our sins, as He sends up to heaven His great cry of intercession for us. There is no half-heartedness here. Or again, see our Lord, our best and dearest Friend, as He stands stripped of His garments at the pillar of the flagellation. Look and listen as the blows fall upon Him, tearing His skin and ploughing deep wounds in His flesh, and see the blood streaming down from every limb; and remember that every blow is willingly received, for us. In the words of

Isaiah: *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit*—"He was offered because He so willed it."* "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."† There is no half-heartedness here. Or see Him again, seated and clad in the mock robe of purple, while the cruel crown of thorns is beaten down upon His head, and once more the blood spurts forth; and again remember that He endures it all willingly, for us. There, too, was no half-heartedness in His work on our behalf. And—since we cannot within the brief time now at our disposal, follow Him through all the steps of His sacred Passion—look on Him once more as He stands before the prætorium of Pilate, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, while the Roman Governor exhibits Him to the crowd below, with the words: *Ecce Homo! Ecce Rex vester!*—"Behold the Man! Behold your King!"* *Ecce!* Behold! There is indeed the Man of all men who alone is worthy of the unreserved affection of our hearts; there indeed is the King who alone is worthy of our absolutely unstinted and unconditioned loyalty. Behold the Man! Behold your King! And what is it that has brought this Man, this King, to such a plight? Our sins, and His love. Behold here the stripes laid on Him by man's fleshly lusts. Behold here the wounds and the bruises inflicted by our

* Isa. liii. 7. † Isa. liii. 5, 6.

pride. See the bonds tied by our wayward disobedience and self-will. Yet not by our sins alone, without His love. *Dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me*—"He loved me, and delivered up Himself for me."* His own blood, shed in the very extremity of torment; this is the price which He has paid to redeem me from sin; this is the price which He has paid to win my poor love. And shall I be half-hearted in His service? Or what return shall I make? Our Stonyhurst motto: *Quant je puis*—"As much as I can," may supply the answer. *Quant je puis*—"As much as I can": ungrudgingly and without stint, O Lord, I offer myself to Thee; teach me to do in all things, great and small, Thy most holy will. Our capacities for generous service are not all equal; and equal measures of grace are not dealt out to all; but *Quant je puis*—"As much as I can," is the safe and sensible rule for every one. *Noblesse oblige.* 'Ye are Christ's." *Empti estis pretio magno*—"Ye have been bought at a great price."

* Gal. ii. 20.

XXX.

"THE THINGS OF A CHILD"*

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child."—1 Cor. xiii. 11.

It is a property of the Christian faith, when rightly apprehended and thoroughly assimilated, to confer a certain dignity on poverty which is sometimes wanting even in the midst of wealth and comfort. And just as the truths of religion have the power of imparting this dignity to the poor, so also, these same truths, if they be thoroughly grasped, and made, as it were, a part of ourselves, confer a certain maturity on youth: and it is not too much to say that a Catholic boy, as compared with his non-Catholic neighbour who has not enjoyed the same spiritual advantages with himself, may fairly be expected to be more manly, and—as the phrase goes—wise beyond his years.

In this connection we may recall to mind the

* July 10, 1904 (Seventh Sunday after Pentecost).

collect which is read in the Mass of that youthful Saint, Stanislas Kostka. It begins with the words: "O God, who, among the other wonders of Thy wisdom, hast conferred, even in tender years, the grace of mature holiness"; and, considering the plentiful means of grace which lie so readily and easily at our disposal, it is lawful to hope that some share in this gift of mature virtue (if not precisely of heroic sanctity) may fall to at least the great majority of us. It is written in Holy Scripture of the brave mother of the Maccabees, that she had "a man's heart in the breast of a woman." And it is a legitimate wish that it might be truthfully said of each one of us that he has a man's heart, even though he has but the stature and the limbs of a boy or youth. It may lawfully be wished that each one of us, if he has to say: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child," may be able to add, before he leaves this college: "But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child." For manhood and maturity are reckoned in God's sight, not by years or inches, but by a right understanding of the real issues of life, and still more by the resolute strength and right determination of the will; by the fixed and firm determination to live as becomes a Christian, redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ; as becomes the brother and the spiritual descendant of saints and martyrs.

What, then, are we to understand by those "things

of a child," which we might not unreasonably be expected to put away from us as the result of our training here? It would, of course, be easy to make a list of more or less childish faults and failings, in the ordinary sense of the words, which it may be hoped, that in the common course of nature, we gradually outgrow. It is not to trifles such as these, however, that our attention may most usefully be directed just now, but rather to something much more important; to a form of childishness which often survives into mature years, that childish view of life which is known as "worldliness."

Now, what is worldliness? It is not, of course, to be confounded with legitimate secular pursuits and occupations. There has been, thank God, throughout the Christian centuries, no lack of unworldly laymen in the Church; while, on the other hand, history affords only too many examples of worldly priests and prelates. What then, is worldliness? It may be defined or described as that disposition or state of mind and heart which leads a man to seek the good things of this world, pleasures, wealth, honour, and distinction, human esteem and human love, as though they were the only things worth seeking; as though they were the sole or the principal end of human life and of human effort; as though they could satisfy the cravings and aspirations of the human soul; or as though—whether they can satisfy our capacities or not—they were the only things to

be had. "The concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life," these, according to the Apostle and Evangelist, St John, are the constitutive elements of worldliness. Impurity, and all that leads to it, avarice or the inordinate desire of wealth, unchecked ambition, and even the unrestrained appetite for amusement, excitement, change; all these things, in their various kinds and degrees, are the parts and the symptoms of worldliness. All these things are the "youthful desires" against which St Paul, in another place, warns his disciple, St Timothy. These are the "things of a child" which we must put away before it can be said of us that we have reached that full maturity of Christian manhood, to which the great majority of men never attain in the whole course of their lives.

Now let us ask ourselves, and let us seriously consider, the question: Why do these inordinate desires, which we sum up under the name of worldliness, deserve to be called "youthful" or even "childish," and why are they unworthy of the man of mature virtue? The answer is, Because it is childish to mistake shams for realities, shadows for substance, make-believe for the serious business of life. It is not that the good things of this world are shams in themselves, but they become shams to us when we use them for purposes for which they were not intended. You may have seen a child

astride upon a chair making believe that it is a horse. It may be a very good chair, but it is only a sham horse. A child who is acting a part in a play for the first time might be excused for thinking himself some one very particular because, having to play the part of the king, he is dressed up for the time in a more or less resplendent costume. But when the curtain comes down he soon learns very practically that it has only been make-believe, and that his brief term of royalty is at an end. And, as he grows a little older, he learns to measure the value of acting not by the supposed dignity of the person represented, but by the fidelity with which the part is played, even though it be only that of a serving-man.

Now the plain fact of the matter is that thoroughly worldly people are great big little children. They agree among themselves—by a kind of tacit compact—to forget that they are on the stage only for a short hour; to ignore the fact that the curtain is coming down, or that each of them will have to make his last exit, before very long; and that the really important thing, even from a purely business point of view, is the question of wages or salary, which in this case is settled not before but after the piece.

Now, please God, none of us are—or are even likely to become—thoroughly worldly people. But we are all, even the best of us, apt to be more or less infected with the spirit of worldliness; and, unless we are very much on our guard, our fits of worldliness

will be apt to grow longer and stronger and more habitual as we grow older; and if they should, they will do us an infinity of mischief. Therefore, if we are wise, we shall look upon the gewgaws of the world with a good deal of distrust and suspicion, lest we should be dazzled by them, to our own loss. Scarlet and gold lace are very effective on parade; but khaki and grey, the quiet and inconspicuous tints, are the most serviceable when the real business of warfare is on hand, and the alert eye of the enemy is to be eluded. And for us the real business of the Christian warfare is always on hand, and the enemy always on the alert. Here in this world, as Holy Scripture warns us, we are camped out in tents, like soldiers on the march, or Eastern pilgrims on a journey; and it is our conduct on the march or pilgrimage which will determine our fortunes when we reach the gates of our abiding city. It were a child's illusion to mistake the encampment of a night for a permanent dwelling; and it is for us, as men, to put away such childish illusions.

Now we have always to beware of misconstruing words of this kind, as though they implied some assertion which our own common-sense would instinctively reject. It would be foolish and mischievous to speak disparagingly of the occupations and the duties of this present life. These occupations are indeed important, these duties — the ordinary duties of boys and of men in their several stations—

are of the highest moment; but they are important, not as means for the acquisition of temporal riches, temporal honour, or pleasures that fleet and fade; but solely in their relation to God, solely as means of carrying out His will, and of securing for us the reward which He alone can give. We all know this so well—in words; we could, all of us, express it so clearly—in words; but until we have taken this lesson to our very hearts, and made it part of ourselves, we have not attained to true Christian manhood; we have not yet put away the things of a child.

There is a picture by a celebrated artist, familiar to us all, which was purchased some years ago to serve as an advertisement of a notable soap, and which bears the inscription: "Bubbles." And there is another picture, by the great German painter Hofmann, of which there is a large and handsome photograph in one of our playrooms, entitled "Christ and the Rich Young Man." Let us put those two pictures, in imagination, side by side, and draw a lesson from them. The one which is entitled "Bubbles" needs neither description nor explanation. We remember it well enough, and it tells its own story. The story represented by Hofmann's picture is told, with slight verbal variations, by St Matthew, St Mark, and St Luke, and it is this.* A certain young man came one day to Jesus and said to Him:

* St Matt. xix. 16-22; St Mark x. 17 ff.; St Luke xviii. 18 ff.

"Master, what must I do to gain eternal life?" Our Lord replied by reciting the commandments: "Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery"; and the rest. The young man said: "All these I have kept from my youth." Then Jesus, looking on him, as St Mark tells us, loved him. And He said to him: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me." And thereupon comes the sad end of the story: if a story can be said to have an end which breaks off abruptly in the middle. The words of St Matthew's Gospel are: "And when the young man had heard this word, he went away sad, for he had great possessions." Great possessions! great bubbles! The choice was offered him by our Lord Himself: on the one hand the Cross, with peace and true inward happiness, and the privilege of His own close companionship; on the other hand — bubbles and toys. He chose the bubbles and the toys; and "he went away sad." And Jesus too, as St Luke tells us, was saddened by his departure. That young man had not yet learned to put away the things of a child. The bubbles are long since burst, and you would search in vain for the fragments of his toys. Poor child! Please God he saved his soul, but—he knows now that he might have done better.

Now this is the case of one to whom the offer of the higher life had been personally made. It is

not made to all of us. Various disqualifications or adverse circumstances may stand in the way. And again, while the offer or invitation may be understood in general terms, and although it falls upon the ears of all as often as this Gospel is read, it does not reach the heart of all; and it is in the heart that it must find its response. *Cor ad cor loquitur. Qui potest capere, capiat!*

But although we are not all called to the higher life of the evangelical counsels, we are all called to that degree of unworldliness which will save us from becoming the slaves of self-indulgence, the puppets of pleasure, fools of fashion, creatures of circumstance. The freedom wherewith Christ hath set us free, is, in its fulness, not merely a deliverance from the bonds of sin, but an emancipation from the trammels of worldliness. It is a real emancipation, because the less worldly we are, the more firmly our hopes are fixed on the next world, the deeper will be our contentment, the more unshaken our peace, amid all the changing vicissitudes, the alternations of prosperity and adversity in this present life; for we know, with a most firm conviction, that neither prosperity nor adversity—and least of all adversity—can keep us from the attainment of the one desire of our hearts. And on the other hand, the more worldly we allow ourselves to become, the further we shall lapse from true contentment of mind and heart. And here we may help ourselves by means

of yet another picture, perhaps still more familiar to us all. It represents an infant in a tub, and bears the inscription: "He won't be happy till he gets it." There, if only we have the sense to see it, is a most graphic representation of that great big little child, the worldly man, the thoroughly self-indulgent man. He is always wanting things, and he won't be happy till he gets them. And as he very often does not get them, he is very often discontented and unhappy, as his language not unfrequently proclaims. And if he did get them he would still be discontented and unhappy, because he would want more. And even if he could grab the whole world, he would still not be satisfied, for he would find it as slippery as a ball of Pears' soap.

Or again, to use a slightly different metaphor, if we strive to grasp with both hands the pleasures of life, they will elude our grasp, and will slip from us without recall as the tide of time sweeps them along. But if we put our foot on them they will support us, and will serve us as stepping-stones to God. And what is to be understood by putting our foot on them? Not renouncing them altogether. This, none of us can do. Even the saints admired the beauties of creation and blessed God for them. But by putting our foot on the pleasures of the world is to be understood, using them just so far as they help us—to God, and serving them just so far as they hinder us —from God. If a certain kind of recreation helps

to keep me out of mischief—good. If to join in it helps to keep others out of mischief—good. If it is necessary or useful to fit me for my work—good. But if, either in general or on some particular occasion, it hinders me from the sacraments, or from some charitable work that I might otherwise do, then —either in general or on that particular occasion— it is not good for me. For instance, two men are invited to a party on the Saturday evening. One says: "Yes; catch me missing an opportunity of enjoying myself!" and he has what is called "a good time." The other says: "No, thanks! it is my evening for going to confession, and nothing shall budge me from that." And he spends perhaps the best part of an hour in a rather gloomy church waiting for his turn to get into a rather stuffy confessional. Which of them two will score most marks in the final examination, for the Highest Certificate? And, without waiting for the ultimate declaration of results, which will be happiest next morning? It is possible that one of them will have some difficulty in getting up in time for the last Mass, and may feel perhaps just a little uneasy in his mind about it. The other will, at any rate, have the testimony of an approving conscience. He has learned to use the good things of this world as stepping-stones, not as lolling-couches. He has learned to put away the things of a child, as unworthy of a man.

XXXI.

IN THE MORNING OF LIFE*

"The sun ariseth and . . . . man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour until the evening."—Ps. ciii. 23.

In the Psalm from which these words are taken, the Psalmist, in the language of Oriental imagery, pours forth his soul in thankful praise of the wonders of creation and of God's providence over His creatures. He speaks of the clouds as God's chariot, of the winds as His messengers, and of the lightnings as His ministers. He tells how in the beginning God clothed the earth with water as with a garment that covered the tops of the highest mountains, and how at His word they shrank and retired to their ocean beds, which is, after all, only a poetic description of physical facts with which modern science has made us familiar. Next, he goes on to speak of the vegetation of the earth, and of the provision thereby made by the Creator of the world for the

* Sunday, July 24, 1904 (preached in the Church of St Peter, Stonyhurst).

needs of beasts and men. And lastly, he tells of the seasons, and of the alternation of night and day. "Thou hast appointed darkness, and it is night: in it shall all the beasts of the earth go abroad." Thereafter: "The sun ariseth, and they are gathered together; and they shall couch in their dens." Then, in the early morning: "Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour until the evening."

And herein is the symbolical shadowing forth of a great and important truth, on which I would say a few words to you to-day.

"Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour until the evening." Yes, brethren, man has been created to work, to labour in the service of God; and it is only by carrying out this purpose of his creation that he can gain his eternal reward, or that he can secure for himself such happiness as is attainable in this present life. True happiness, solid happiness, genuine inward peace, as contrasted with those fitful alternations either of sinful pleasure and remorse, or of idle pleasure and discontent or boredom, which are the portion of so many—true happiness, even in this world, is to be found only by shaping our lives in accordance with God's will; and God's will for each one of us, whatever our position in society may be, is that a man should labour. For no man, however easy his circumstances, is it God's will that he should pass his life in idle-

ness; for no man, so long as he enjoys the gifts of a sane mind in a sound body, is it God's will that he should be a mere drone in the social hive; nay, more than this, for no man is it God's will that he should be really idle during any portion of his time. Rest and recreation, amusement and change, are, in their due measure and season, useful and even needful. But their true function is to fit us for the serious work of life. So used, they are tools employed in the service of God. But when they are pushed beyond this point and treated as ends in themselves, they become forms of idleness, and are no better than the toys of our infancy. Tools for a man and toys for a child; and as we emerge from the morning of youth to the full day of manhood, it behooves us to put aside the things of a child.

It is a truth that you will be well-advised to lay up in your hearts, that your time of rest is not here, but beyond the grave; your true hopes are there, not here; and the more consistently and constantly you keep your eye fixed on that distant goal, the more surely will you find that happiness here which always eludes us if we seek it for its own sake. You need, and if you order your lives wisely, you will find, even here, that timeless content (as it has been called) which is the happy lot of those whose thoughts are set on eternity. Here labour, and there rest; and in looking forward to that rest, you shall find

rest here in the midst of your labour. Such, in a form not unsuited, perhaps, to the present time and the present season, is the teaching of St Ignatius Loyola, whose feast we are in a manner anticipating to-day, in the first and fundamental meditation of the *Spiritual Exercises.*

In the morning of life "man goeth forth to his work"; each man to his allotted task; and these allotted tasks are in outward seeming exceedingly diverse and various. But (still following the lead of St Ignatius) I would remind you that, notwithstanding the manifold differences that mark us off one from another, notwithstanding the multitudinous variety of our several employments, all of us, as Christians, whether poor or rich, simple or gentle, unlearned or learned, weak or strong, young or old, have been called to one profession; and that is, the profession of arms. We are, all of us, soldiers of Jesus Christ. In His royal corps we have, all of us, even the youngest, long since enrolled ourselves as cadets. It is indeed a royal service on which we have entered; and our regiment is not of this or that shire or local district, but just "The King's Own." And it is a close personal service; for Christ your King and Captain knows you, not as His Majesty King Edward VII. might know you, by your name and rank and the number of your company, or by some exploit "mentioned" (as the phrase goes) "in despatches"; but He knows you, oh so much

better than you know yourselves; He loves you with a love ten-thousandfold stronger than that of a father, ten-thousandfold more tender than a mother's, more intimately affectionate than that of your dearest friend; He asks from you only the merest fraction of what He, as man, has first done and endured for you; but—though all that you have to offer Him may be little in itself—He claims nothing less than all your heart's loyalty and your most entire self-devotion. *Quant je puis*—"As much as I can,"—this is to be the measure of our loyalty and service. In His army, in His own regiment—as I said just now—you have long since enrolled yourselves; and, as those of you who are still under tutelage go forth to your life's work, He will give to each one of you, poor and rich alike, your commission and your charge.

And what is this commission, this charge, which He gives you? It is, in the first place, to keep a fortress, a stronghold, for your King; and over and above this to undertake as much for His cause, upon your own initiative, as you may find opportunity to do. You have to hold a fort for the King, and that fort (need I say it?) is the citadel of your own heart. It is His by right of creation, which gives Him an absolute and indefeasible dominion over it. It is His by right of your redemption. It is His by right of your own self-surrender; His too, it may be, by right of repeated forgiveness for

repeated unfaithfulness. "Ye are Christ's,"* all of you, by every right and title. Ye are His, body and soul, to-day, to-morrow, and all through your lives. Ye are Christ's; and never will you find so noble a King, so loving a Master, so dear a Friend, as He is, who is the source and fountain of all nobility, all goodness, all kindness, all beauty, and all love. Ye are Christ's, and He bids you hold the fort for Him. The enemy of your souls, for all his show of strength, can never force an entrance, can never take the stronghold by storm. He can gain admittance only if you are false and faithless to your trust, if you basely surrender to him the key of your heart, which is your own free will. So then, brethren, those of you in particular who in the morning of life are going forth to your work, renew to-day more strongly than ever those good purposes which you have so often formed. Carry with you, whether from your village school or from this great College, a firm resolution that, cost what it may, you will keep yourselves unspotted from the foulness of mortal sin; and that, if you should ever have the misfortune through human frailty to fall, you will as soon as possible seek a remedy in the holy sacrament of Penance. But, however strong may be your resolution now, do not rely upon your present disposition. The grace of God, like the food which we take for our bodily sustenance, is given for the day, and our

* 1 Cor. iii. 23.

daily need of it must be provided for by daily prayer —the prayer of the heart, not merely of the lips. Day by day we must say from our hearts: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"; day by day we must ask our Lady's intercession: "Pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death"; pray for us *sinners*, that if we have sinned aforetime we may henceforth sin no more; pray for us *now*, that we may not sin to-day; pray for us *at the hour of our death*, that we may have the crowning grace of final perseverance, or at the worst—if, alas, we should have proved unfaithful meanwhile—of final repentance.

But we have something more to do than merely to hold the fort. There is some more active service which our King and Captain does not indeed require of us by way of strict precept, and under penalty of His grievous displeasure, but which He does most lovingly invite us to undertake, and which He does ask at our hands. And what is it? In order to answer this question we must have a clear idea of the enemy against whom we are to fight, and whom we are called on to attack instead of waiting till he attacks us. I have already spoken of our arch-enemy the devil, and, by implication, of his ally, the flesh,—that is to say, our own corrupt and sinful inclinations. But he has another ally to whom, in connection with the subject of loyalty to Christ as our King, St Ignatius most particularly directs our atten-

tion. This third enemy is, of course, what is called in Holy Scripture "the world." The world,—or in other words, the maxims, opinions, and influence of those men who live only for this present life—the world, I say, is forever fighting against God, against Christ Jesus our Lord, against His Church, and against ourselves individually. The world, by its manifold attractions, so loudly and boastfully proclaimed, is forever alluring and seducing the hearts of men from their allegiance to Jesus Christ. It is forever dinning in our ears the assurance that pleasure, wealth, success, honour, human love for its own sake, are the only things worth seeking, or at least that they are the best that are to be had, and by dangling its baubles before our eyes it is forever drawing us away from those things that are for our true peace, from those higher ideals of life which the Gospel sets before us. What an unworthy inconsistency,—I had almost said, what a hollow insincerity,—does the life of a worldly Catholic exhibit! Day by day he says, with his lips: "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But how much does he really care about the hallowing of God's name, the spread of His Kingdom, the carrying out of His all-holy will?

It is the magnifying of his own name, the consolidation of his own fortunes, the carrying out of his own will and pleasure, that are his real concern. The things of God, the eternal truths, the salvation and

perfection of his own soul, the interests of our Lord in the world—these things, which ought to have the foremost place in his thoughts and aims and intentions, are rudely shouldered away by a pushing crowd of ephemeral interests, and relegated to a quite subordinate position. Dear brethren, please God we may never be content with such a half-hearted service as this, a service all unworthy of one who has received his commission in the regiment of "The King's Own."

I am not now asking you to consider worldliness merely as a fruitless pursuit of bubbles which will burst when we touch them, and of toys whereof we shall soon tire; nor, again, merely as a bad speculation for the individual, as a profitless expenditure which will be disallowed at the final audit of accounts. Just now I am asking you to consider the spirit of worldliness as worthy of our most cordial hatred and detestation on the ground that "the world" (always using the term in its scriptural sense) is the great enemy of Christ Jesus, our King and Captain. The better we learn to know Him, the more tenderly and strongly we learn to love Him, the more His Divine Person and His sacred Humanity become a living reality to us, the more thoroughly we make our own those truths which are taught us by our crucifix, by so much the more seriously and earnestly we shall hate the spirit of the world, and the more sedulously we shall be on our guard against it. For the world is a most insidious and deceitful enemy. If one may

draw a similitude from our late war, he lurks behind every kopje; he lies ambushed in every spruit; and the commonest object by the wayside affords him cover whence he may discharge his deadly fire.

What, then, are the arms and the methods of warfare by means of which we must fight against the world and the spirit of worldliness, both in ourselves and in others? It is plain that you cannot, as laymen, preach unworldliness to the worldly society in which your lot is or may be cast. But whether as laymen or as priests and religious, we can set the example of an unworldly life, which is, after all, the best kind of preaching. We all of us have ready to our hand the two weapons indicated by St Ignatius when he is dealing with this subject,—the two weapons of spiritual poverty, or detachment, and of a genuine humility. By spiritual poverty is meant the recognition—not in theory alone but in practice—that whatsoever we may possess is not our very own, to do as we like with, but is God's loan to us, to be conscientiously employed or freely surrendered for His service, instead of being wastefully squandered on a contemptible and unmanly self-indulgence. And that humility is genuine which not only leads us to acknowledge our nothingness before God as His creatures, and our manifold indebtedness, as sinners, to our Divine Redeemer, but which checks a man from an inordinate craving for the praise of his fellow-men, and preserves him from self-conceit and

elation when honours come to him unsought. It is this example of the unworldly life, and, humanly speaking, it is this example alone, which can leaven what is called "society" by setting before it higher ideals than it had dreamed of.

And, lest our higher ideals of life should seem to be in any degree vague and nebulous, a sort of castle in the clouds, do not forget that the counterpart and complement of that spiritual poverty of which I have spoken is the practice of active charity. To say that we should hold ourselves and our goods at God's disposal, is no mere empty form of words. It means that instead of gratifying each passing whim by the purchase of whatever takes our fancy for the moment, our habitual question should rather be: "Can I do without it? Can I not serve God better by devoting the means at my disposal to some worthier object?" It means plain living and generous giving. And it means, moreover, that we should not only be ready with our alms, but ready also to render our personal service to our Lord by personal service to His poor. This is spiritual poverty, its root and its fruit; this is the chief weapon wherewith we are to fight the battles of our King against His enemy the world.

And now, perhaps, it may seem strange to some of you that so little should have been said this morning about our Holy Father, St Ignatius Loyola. Well, it seemed to me that that great saint would be better pleased, and also that it might be more profitable for

you, if, instead of recounting once more that story of his life which is so familiar to you all, I were to strive to put before you the main principles of his teaching, the principles laid down in the three leading meditations of the *Spiritual Exercises*, viz., "The Foundation," "The Kingdom of Christ," and the "Two Standards." Every one of these meditations may be said to be directed against the spirit of worldliness. And to wean men, in the early morning of life, not merely from sin but from the false maxims of the world, may be said to be the main purpose of Jesuit education. Were we, as Jesuits, to slacken our efforts for the fulfilment of this purpose, we should be unfaithful to the solemn trust and charge which our Holy Father bequeathed to us.

O Jesus! may we never be false to this sacred trust. O give us grace and strength ever to hold aloft Thy Cross, whence Thou as the Sun of Justice dost shine upon this earth, to draw men's hearts upwards from phantom joys and shadowy dreams to the brightness of Thy unchanging and immutable truth; *ex umbris et imaginibus ad veritatem.*

Sursum corda! Lift up your hearts, dear brethren, and throughout life's long and toilsome campaign guide your steps and all your movements by that bright and pure light that streams from the Cross of Jesus. "The Sun hath arisen," the Sun of Justice hath shined upon us, "and man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour—until the evening."

And when that evening closes in upon you, which precedes the dawn of the eternal day, may your Guardian Angel and Mary your Advocate present each one of you to the Great King with words such as these: "Lord! he hath had a true zeal for Thy honour; the hallowing of Thy name, and the spread of Thy Kingdom, and the carrying out of Thy most holy will has been the desire of his heart: he has done the work, not of his own choice or his own caprice, but the work which Thou, O Lord, gavest him to do." Amen.

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